TRACTS

OF

THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN

ASSOCIATION.

FIRST SERIES.....VOL. VIII.

CONTAINING NUMBERS LXXXV. TO XCV.

BOSTON:
CHARLES BOWEN,
GENERAL DEPOSITORY, 141 WASHINGTON ST.
1835.

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I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL ST.

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1st Series. No. 85.

EXCUSES

FOR THE

NEGLECT OF BENEVOLENT EFFORTS

CONSIDERED.

BY REV. ANDREW P. PEABODY.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.

JULY, 1834.

Price 3 *Cents.*

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS, BOSTON.

EXCUSES FOR THE

NEGLECT OF BENEVOLENT EFFORTS

CONSIDERED.

The duty of doing good to others, every man will admit in the abstract; but I fear that it is not so generally, uniformly and confidently performed as it ought to be, even by professing christians. There are many and great discouragements in the way of beneficence, which make some well-disposed people useless members of society, and which partially paralyze the efforts of those who wish and strive to do good. To consider and, if possible, to remove some few of these discouragements, and thus to cherish in my readers a spirit of active and cheerful benevolence, will be my object in the following essay.

1. The benevolence of many is checked by *doubts as to the expediency of most of the common forms and modes of charity.* All will agree that good ought to be done; but hardly any two men will agree as to the best mode of

doing it. Says one: 'individual effort is worse than useless. The principle of association lies at the foundation of all effective charity. You must do good in concert with others or you can do nothing.' Says another: 'trust not the judgment of large bodies of men. The funds of benevolent societies are always either squandered or misapplied. If you would do good, seek out your own objects; and be governed by your own discretion.' In like manner, if you attempt a choice between the numerous benevolent projects of the day, you may perhaps find objections to all of them. Would you aid in the general diffusion of knowledge? You may be raising men of humble powers above their proper rank and callings, and making them superficial and pedantic. Would you forward the plan of African colonization? You may be riveting the chains and augmenting the sufferings of the slaves left in the country. Would you join the ranks of those who aim at the immediate abolition of slavery? You are perhaps preparing rapine and slaughter for the whole slave-holding population. Would you enlist with the sworn friends of temperance? The warmth of their zeal has called forth many enemies, has occasioned in many places a violent re-action, and may do much harm to the cause that they espouse. Would you cast your mite into the missionary treasury? You may be paying for the dissemination of error instead of truth, or you may support idlers and simpletons instead of able and faithful laborers. Would you give your money or goods to feed the poor? They may expend your gifts in the means of dissipation, and be made more wretched, not more comfortable, by your charity. Thus many

really kind-hearted people argue about the numerous ways of doing good; and at last, bewildered in the vain search after some unexceptionable form of beneficence, are ready to exclaim with the Psalmist: '*who will show us any good?* Who will teach us how we may gratify our benevolent impulses to some undoubtedly good purpose.'

This is a real and a great difficulty. But yet it ought not to discourage any one from attempting to do good; for it is far from covering the whole ground of benevolent effort. It applies with full force only to some of the enterprises which require combined effort. To every such enterprise there may be objections. If you can deliberately weigh the arguments for and against any particular enterprise, and determine to your own satisfaction that it will not do much good and is attended with little injury, it may be *your* duty not to embark in it, however strongly you are urged so to do. But if you cannot examine for yourself, you may perhaps be authorised to embark, by the confidence you place in the judgment of those who have examined and do approve. And if, among all the schemes for doing good, you find no one in the expediency of which you can cordially concur, stand aloof from all of them. But remember, that your objection to modes is no excuse for your neglect of the duty; and there are still ways enough open for you as individuals to be useful. There are things, both in the physical and the moral world, which you *know* to be good, and which you can impart to those in need. You know that physical ease and comfort are good; and you have frequent opportunities of directly administering relief to want and suffering. You know that industry is good; and you

can busy yourselves in providing employment for the idle. You know that a knowledge of common arts and common things is good; and you can aid in the diffusion of such knowledge. You know that honesty, temperance and purity are good; and, if you approve not of the ways in which others promote them, you can use your own individual influence in keeping men out of the way of temptation, and urging them to lead pure, honest and sober lives. You know that the bible without human comment is good; and you can give it to those who have it not. And as long as so wide a field of unexceptionable charity is open to you, the fact that many of the ways in which others attempt to do good are manifestly faulty is no reason why you should not be active in doing good.

2. Another discouraging circumstance that prevents many people from engaging in works of active usefulness is *the feeling that they can do but little.* 'If,' say they, 'we had the capacities and means that others have, we would gladly devote ourselves to benevolent effort; but we are able at best to accomplish very little.'

Readers, when you offer this excuse, what do you mean by little? In the material and the spiritual world, things are great or small only by comparison; and the circumstance that any particular object appears small in comparison with others is far from rendering it worthless. The beacon light that shines over a few leagues of the ocean, and now and then saves a vessel from shipwreck, does but little good when we compare it with the pole star, which guided the daring mortals who first launched a boat upon the wave, and which still shines over the whole Northern hemisphere, a star of good omen to every

benighted sailor and traveller. Yet would you for this reason demolish the light-house? And that same star, how insignificant its twinkling, how trivial its use, when we compare it with the sun at noon day, enlightening every habitation, directing the toil, cheering the hearts, guiding the ways of all the dwellers upon earth! But would you for this reason blot out the pole-star from the heavens? 'No,' you would say, 'let the lesser lights shine, for they are useful to us, though the greater be infinitely more so.' And the same reasoning holds good in the spiritual world. You excuse yourselves from doing what you can for the good of your brethren, on the ground that you can do but little. On the same ground, all the benefactors of mankind in past times, Washington, Howard, Luther and St Paul, might have excused themselves from doing the good that they have done. You read the memoirs of Howard the philanthropist. You follow him from dungeon to dungeon, time and again, through the whole length and breadth of Europe. You see him everywhere an angel of light and mercy, bringing comfort, health and hope to the captive, making the voice of brotherly love reach those who had deemed themselves beneath human sympathy, drawing forth the victims of tyranny from noisome dungeons which they had thought to tenant for life. You see him giving a new impulse to the benevolent throughout the civilized world, an impulse which has not ceased, which will not cease until mercy is shown to the guilty, all the world over, as it is shown by our Father in heaven. You exclaim in despair: 'how little good can we do compared with what this man has done!' but the good that each of you can do, compared with what Howard has done, is

infinitely greater than what he has done, when compared with the blessings derived from Jesus of Nazareth, the friend, not of a single class of men in a single continent, but of all men everywhere, — their Saviour, not from physical restraint and suffering, but from sin and spiritual death, the giver, not of a few days of comfort and of liberty, but of eternal life. And now, if your plea for not doing good be a valid one, why might not Howard, when he first conceived his noble enterprise, have seated himself in despondency and said: 'what encouragement have I to lead a useful life? Let me wear myself out in the service of my brethren, I can do but little for them, nothing indeed worthy to be named in comparison with what Christ has done for them.'

No, Christians, it is not by comparisons like these, that the degree or the effect of our beneficence is to be estimated. Did we do good to be seen of men, these comparisons would be worth making, and those who feel that they could do but little, would be justified in doing nothing. But he who does good to his brethren, does it in the sight and at the command of him,

> 'To whom *there is* no high, no low, no great, no small.
> Who fills, and bounds, connects and equals all;'

and with him a man is accepted, not according to the reputed greatness or littleness of what he does, but according to his ability.

But to look at the subject in a merely human point of view. You say, reader, that you can do but little good. Perhaps there are a million of persons in this country who can do as much good as you can, and no more. Multiply

the little that you can do by a million, and will the product be little? No, it will be immense. But each of these million persons may draw back on the same ground on which you do, and thus this immense amount of good remain undone. But if you, if each one of these million persons will say: 'I can indeed do but little, yet that little with God's aid I will do,' what a vast difference it will make in the amount of good done in the country! It is thus, by numerous small sums, that great aggregates are produced; and these small sums are needed to make the sum total of beneficence great. There are but few that can do much good; the greater part of the good done in the world is done by those who singly do but little.

Again you say that you can do but little good, that is, at any one time. But cannot you do that little often? You pass not a single day without meeting with more or fewer people whom you can benefit, in estate, mind or heart. You can then do a little good every day of your life. And if God spare you but a single year, will not three hundred and sixty-five times that little, or, if he spare you ten years, will not three thousand six hundred and fifty times that little constitute an amount of good worth doing, an amount on which ages upon ages hence you will look back with joy?

But is it certain that you can do but little good? If you have a willing mind, the want of external means is not an insuperable barrier to beneficence. Look around you, among those who are the most actively useful, to whom the anxious apply for counsel, the necessitous for aid, the widow and the fatherless for protection, the

sick and dying for care, for sympathy, for christian instruction. Will you not find among the foremost of these sons and daughters of charity some who, though rich in faith, are poor as to this world's goods, humble in rank, of limited information, of feeble mental powers? They have consecrated themselves to this work, they are ready to devote the little they have to the service of their brethren, and God has crowned that little with an abundant blessing. It is not many years since a young female in the neighborhood of the Alps, with no worldly estate except a very small piece of ground, maintained and educated by the labor of her own hands ten orphan children. Nor have the instances been rare in which very limited means have, in the hands of prudent charity, been made to accomplish results, for which, reasoning abstractly, we should suppose a large fortune requisite. Cultivate a fervent spirit of brotherly love, and, though the means of your charity may appear small, you may yet be eminently useful.

Again, you say that you can do but little good. When you say so, do you speak of good appertaining to the body or the soul? The good that can be done to the frail, perishable body is at best but little. Not so with that which is done to the immortal spirit. Not so with religious charity. That acts upon eternity; and must therefore, when it confers any good, confer a great good. If you train up a child in piety, if you reclaim a sinner from the error of his ways, if you are instrumental in checking a single sinful, or forming a single virtuous habit in a fellow-man, the effects of your charity will last as long as the soul exists; and you may throughout eternity feel

a holy joy in witnessing the fruits of your labor. Nor is the least act of religious charity lost. Every item of christian knowledge, every new accession of christian principle, every augmentation of moral power becomes a part of the permanent property of the soul, — a property which is constantly accumulating, and every portion of which is in constant employ and bears an abundant interest.

Finally, *can* you do but little good? If so, God requires but little of you. Do that little, and your reward shall be great.

3. Another discouragement to benevolent effort and especially to religious charity is found in the circumstance that *the results of individual beneficence cannot be traced.* Your little rill flows into the great ocean of charity, mingles with its waters, and you cannot follow its current any farther, or see what end it reaches and what good it does.

But here the way of duty is very plain. You are commanded to do good, and God has promised a blessing upon your efforts. No matter whether you see the blessing or not, if you cherish a christian faith in the divine promises. In this world it is God's will that you should lead a life of faith, that you should know but in part and see as through a glass darkly. But what you see and know not now you may see and know hereafter. The knowledge for want of which you are ready to grow weary of well doing is doubtless a part of that revelation which God will make in the future life to those that love him. Then the rills of individual charity which were here mingled will be again separated, and will flow on

full, and deep, and clear throughout eternity. And then you will see the fruits of your labors and be satisfied, and will thank God that he permitted you to be his fellow-workers upon earth.

4. But there are yet perhaps some of my readers who will say: '*we are too young, we are too poor, we are too ignorant to do any good at all.*'

I answer that, admitting that you can do good in no other way, there are *two* ways in which you may do certain and great good.

First, you may do good by your *example*. There is no one who cannot influence others by his example. The youngest child in an infant school associates with children of nearly his own age, who will imitate more or less his good or bad conduct. The most ignorant man living can by his example powerfully influence for good or evil a few humble minds within his own sphere of action. The poorest person in any given community may, if he chooses, do more good by leading a life of quiet holiness than the mere wealth of his immensely rich neighbors could effect. I have no doubt that the indigent members of the christian church in any given community exert, mainly through the beauty of holiness as exemplified in their lives, a much greater influence in the cause of their master than the same number of wealthy Christians. There is something peculiarly edifying in those specimens of the christian character which we meet only in the abodes of humble poverty. In other walks of life we cannot be certain that the character rests solely on christian principle. Do we see a rich man uniformly upright and honest? It would be strange, were he tempted to be otherwise.

Does he bear occasional privation or calamity with fortitude? It may be that he seeks comfort mainly in the worldly goods that are left him. But strip a person of every earthly possession, reduce him to abject penury, and you then throw him for support wholly upon christian principle. And when you see a person under the pressure of penury cheerful, kind, grateful, submissive, heavenly minded, you witness a full manifestation of the power of christian faith. Indeed, I want no stronger evidence of the divine origin of our religion than I can find in conversing with some poverty-stricken widow, who has no treasure but her bible, who had rather have that than the whole world without it, and who, while talking of its truths and its promises, can forget privation, sickness and solitude, and deem herself one of God's most highly favored children. I know that nothing short of divine power can thus elevate the soul; and I therefore know that the religion which does it comes from God.

There are hardly any means of grace which God has so eminently blessed for the conviction of unbelievers and the conversion of sinners as examples of christian piety in very humble life. Not many years ago there lived in a farm-house in England a young female, imperfectly educated and in very narrow circumstances. She doubtless thought that she could do no great good to any one but herself, though I doubt not that she endeavored to do all the good that she could. She early became a disciple of Christ, and was early summoned to his heavenly kingdom. Yet there was so much of the power of christianity displayed in her short life, her illness and her death, that her example has perhaps made as many con-

verts from unbelief and sin as St Paul's preaching ever made. The clergyman who visited her published a sketch of her life and character in the admirable tract entitled the *Dairyman's Daughter*. That tract has been translated into *nineteen* different languages; and more than *four million* copies of it have been printed. And, wherever it has gone, a divine blessing has followed it. The author of it was personally apprised of *thirty* instances in which persons attributed their conversion from sin under God to the perusal of that tract. Thus great may be the power of a single good example in very humble life. Let those of us then who profess ourselves the followers of Christ let our light so shine before men, that others seeing our good works may glorify our Father in heaven. And especially, let those in humble life take encouragement from the thought that God may have appointed them their lowly estate, that they may the more strikingly show forth the riches of his grace, and that through their poverty others may be made rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Let them regard their poverty as a divinely assigned post of duty; and he who raised the houseless wanderer of Galilee far above all principalities and powers, will raise them up also to sit with him in heavenly places.

But, *secondly*, those who feel that they can do good in no other way can do good not only by their example, but by their *prayers*. The degree of efficacy which God may see fit to attach in any case to intercessory prayer, we know not; but we are commanded 'to intercede for all men, and assured that the fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.' Readers, do you love your

fellow-men? Would you do them good, were it in your power? Bear them on your hearts in your supplications to Almighty God, you may thus call down blessings upon those whom your hand cannot aid, whom your lips cannot counsel.

I have thus considered and I trust removed some of the discouragements to active usefulness. If they have been removed to the satisfaction of my readers, I beg them to apply themselves with renewed vigor to the discharge of their social duties. And would you, my friends, be steadfast and persevering in the discharge of them, hope for no earthly reward, but look with unwavering assurance to that great reward in heaven which he who went about doing good has promised to all that imitate him.

1st Series. No. 86.

CHRIST

THE

IMAGE OF GOD.

BY JAMES W. THOMPSON,

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.

AUGUST, 1834.

Price 3 *Cents.*

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS, BOSTON.

CHRIST

THE

IMAGE OF GOD.

He, and he alone, who fully comprehends the character of Christ, has attained a true conception of God. 'If ye had known me,' said the Saviour, 'ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.'

Our blessed Lord has given, in himself, a Revelation embodying clearer and juster views of the Divine Being, than had ever been formed previously to his coming. The ancient Pagans, in all their wisdom, knew not God. They had but vague and shadowy ideas of his perfections. We are indebted for the sublime descriptions of Him with which we occasionally meet in their writings, less to the energy of their faith than to the affluence of their imagination. Their representations were not so much copies of sentiment that had a real existence in their hearts, as creations of a fancy that loved to see the grandeur and beauty of its own work. How much soever we may admire their genius, their learning, their skill in the arts, and the extent of their philosophical re-

searches, we are constrained to believe that in their ideas of the Great Author of all things, so far as these were fixed and operative, they fell below the most humble and unlettered of the disciples of Christ.

Nor will it be denied that the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Hebrew Church, although in constant communication with the Deity, and familiar with the most glorious manifestations of his presence, misconceived, or rather failed to conceive, in several particulars, His true character. His spirituality was, in their view, but little different from a subtile and refined form of matter. They worshipped Him as the God of their nation only, but not of the Universe. They rarely, if ever, thought of Him in the tender and touching relation of a Father.

No one who reflects at all can dispute the importance of knowing God. For the knowledge of Him is the basis of all correct reasoning either in regard to His dispensations or our destiny. We cannot advance a single step without it towards any rational conclusion, relating either to the design of our existence, the trials of our lot, or the condition that awaits us. From the capacities of the soul we indeed infer its immortality: but the argument begins and proceeds on the supposition of the power and goodness of God. So, from the Infinite wisdom of God, we reason to the suitableness of His dispensations to promote the general happiness of His creatures; and from his boundless mercy, to the care he will take of us in all time to come. Now, if we err in conceiving Him to be infinite in power, and wisdom, and goodness, it is plain that our conclusions from these premises must be mere fallacies. 'To know Thee,' says the wisdom of Solomon, 'is perfect righteousness; yea, to know thy power is the root of immortality.'

To enlighten us on a subject so intimately connected with our well-being and happiness, Jesus Christ was qualified and commissioned of the Father. He came into the world professing to be its Light, and to be able to show his followers the true God. 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'

There are three ways in which he has accomplished this object. By direct teaching, by implications in his discourses, and by *his own character, his own visible conduct and example.* He was the Image of the Invisible God, the Representative of the Infinite and Eternal Mind. We shall endeavor in these pages to develope this view of his character.

What strikes us first and most obviously, in considering the life of the Saviour, is the astonishing power which he possessed and manifested. It was almost literally true that whatever the Father had done, the Son did likewise. At one time, we find him, by a word, quieting the rage of the sea, and walking upon its billows, as firmly as though they had been a pavement of marble; at another, filling the appetite of many thousands gathered to hear him, with a few loaves and fishes; again pouring the sweet light upon eyes that had never seen, opening ears that had been sealed from their creation, and loosing tongues that had been bound with the spell of perpetual silence; and yet again, bidding the departed reason reässume her throne, and bodies, slumbering in the graves, awake and come forth from their dark chambers.

You will observe that this supernatural power of Jesus, in the exercise of which, as we maintain, he represented the Deity, was always used in a spirit of kindness and

mercy — was always guided by benevolence. It was not put forth to blast, and wound, and destroy, but to quicken, and heal, and restore. In no instance did Jesus exert his miraculous power to take revenge on his enemies, and in no instance was it exerted to produce or increase human wretchedness. Nor was it ever used as means of exciting a dread of his person or terror in the minds of those who witnessed its effects; nor yet for the sake of showing its greatness and extent, and making men marvel.

Examine every action in the history of the Saviour, and you will not find one in which his power was employed for any of the purposes we have named. On the contrary, when tempted to make an ostentatious display of his power by casting himself down, unhurt, from the pinnacle of the temple, the temptation was instantly resisted and overcome. This would have been an entirely selfish use of his power. And when tempted by hunger to use his miraculous power in transforming stones into bread, this temptation too was instantly suppressed. It was not for such a purpose that his power had been given him.

Do you ask, why he was thus scrupulous in the use of his miraculous power, why it was always directed by a beneficent purpose, why it was never made the instrument of selfishness or vindictive rage? We answer, because by his use of that power, by his own mighty acts of beneficence, it was his office to illustrate and exemplify the Infinite Benevolence of the God who sent him. The moment he had consented to wield the arm of his might merely for his personal safety or interest, or for any purpose other than one of benevolence, that moment

he would have ceased to be the Express Image, the True Representative of the Father. Whatever he did was done like God. He acted as God would have acted. He spake as God would have spoken. His thoughts were the thoughts of God. His will was the will of God. His commandments were the law of God. 'For, he was the brightness of the Everlasting Light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness.'

Inquire in the next place, what was the *feeling* which the Saviour uniformly manifested towards the human race. Was it a feeling of kindness and affection, of unwearied and invincible love, or of displeasure, contempt, and hatred? Did he conduct towards them as though he felt the strong yearnings of a brother's heart for their welfare, or as though he were willing that they should perish in their sins and misery? Did he weep in pity when he foresaw the wretchedness which was to fall upon the Holy City of the Temple, the Hebrew's dearest refuge and last hope, or did he exult in the prospect of the overthrow and destruction of those who had rejected and despised and were about to crucify him? The heathen, in his ignorance and sin, was he willing to restore him to the knowledge and worship of the true God, to the practice of virtue, and to the happiness of truth and piety, or did he prefer that he should remain in his darkness, and continue to do homage to his poor idols, and bury himself in the follies, absurdities, and mysteries of a false religion? Did he show forbearance and gentleness towards men, and patience under the insults which they heaped upon him, or implacable anger that his commandments were disregarded, his counsels set at nought, and his person despised?

These questions need only be asked, to bring their true answers at once to every ingenuous mind. But the inference is that on which we dwell with unspeakable satisfaction and delight; namely, that whatever were the feelings the Saviour manifested in regard to mankind, he manifested to a degree the attributes of the Eternal God, of his Father and our Father. If, for example, he discovered a peculiar abhorrence of certain sins, as pride, hypocrisy, or worldly mindedness, we may *know* thereby that those sins are peculiarly abhorrent to the Divine Being. If he uniformly exhibited a placable disposition, a readiness to pardon the penitent, we may *know* thereby that God is placable and forgiving. If he showed kindness and mercy to those who were hostile to him and in array against his cause, we may *know* thereby that God bears loving kindness even towards such as love him not. 'For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'

From this view of the character and office of Christ might be deduced a strong argument in favor of the truth of Christianity. By comparing what he *taught* concerning the Supreme Being with his own *character* as the Image or Representative of the attributes of God, we should find a complete and strict agreement, such as no mere philosopher or moralist by the force of his talents or ingenuity could possibly have presented. We should find not merely the correspondence which we might expect between his teaching and his character as an inspired Teacher, as one claiming to be the reformer and Saviour of the world, and an example for man in all the trials and duties of life, but as one acting, at the same time, in the stead of God, representing him, giving an exhibition of his perfections.

You find him teaching that God is the Father of all men. Look at him and you will see him professing and evincing for all men paternal tenderness and affection. You find him teaching that God is good to all, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust. Follow him, and you will see publicans and sinners in the train of his benefits, the tidings of salvation published to a world lying in wickedness, not the righteous but sinners called to repentance. You find him teaching that God listens to our entreaties and is ever ready to supply our wants. When was he ever known to turn away from the cry of distress, to frown on the meanest petitioner for his favor and mercy, to show the slightest apathy to the moral wants of mankind? You find him teaching that God is infinitely pure and holy. Where do you find a stain on his garment, a spot on his soul, a leaning towards sin, or even the appearance of evil? These correspondences, — and they might be traced much farther, — furnish to our minds, a strong proof of the divine mission of Jesus. His declarations concerning himself, his doctrine, and his character are in perfect keeping. His teaching and his representation of the Father in his own person, are perfectly harmonious, are strictly one. Does not this stamp the whole as true?

There is, we may add, no light in which the Saviour can be contemplated more honorable to him than that which presents him to us as the image of the Father's perfections. And there is no way by which we can evince greater confidence in him than by studying his character in order to learn that of the Supreme Being. For he is most truly just to the Saviour, and pays him the most acceptable respect, who regards him purely in the

character which he claimed; whose conceptions of him neither fall below nor rise above his real elevation.

The man would be considered as beside himself, who on viewing a beautiful and finished portrait, however striking the resemblance might be, should believe, and persist in maintaining, that it was not a picture, but real flesh and blood. Now, if we may use the figure without appearing to our readers irreverent, we regard Jesus Christ as the picture of God; executed by his hand; perfect in every part; not seeming to breathe like the canvas of some human master, but breathing; not seeming as if burning with a God-like love and just ready to open his lips with the words of eternal life, but really filled and fired with the benevolence of his original, and speaking in words by him inspired of Man and Providence and Heaven. In him we see bodied forth in inimitable beauty and perfection whatever is great and glorious and good in God. Gazing on the picture, so striking, so august, so divine, we are insensibly prostrated in adoration of the Infinite One whom it represents, and all that is within us, in harmony of worship, ascribe 'blessing and wisdom and honor and power' to the Father of Jesus Christ our Lord!

There is in the hearts of many good Christians, as is very well known, a continual and perplexing fear that they may fail of rendering to the Saviour that measure of homage and honor which is his due. We greatly respect this fear. It indicates a mind regardful of duty, impressed with a love of justice, anxious to answer, in trust and gratitude, the claims of condescending and unmerited kindness.

But it must not be forgotten, that this fear proceeds from the same cause which gave rise, in remote antiquity,

to the idolatrous custom of paying divine honors to wise princes, illustrious benefactors, and distinguished statesmen and warriors. The fear of being chargeable with ingratitude which has led some Christians so to interpret the scriptures as to justify their worship of the Son as the Infinite God, the Express Image as the Unchangeable Original, has reared many a statue to human weakness, and consecrated many a shrine to human folly and crime, and wrung many a sacrifice from human superstition. The same principle which has elevated the Holy Virgin to an object of worship, and canonized saints and martyrs, has attributed supreme divinity to the Redeemer of the world.

We most cheerfully accord to the Son of God all the dignity, all the excellence, all the perfection which we think the Gospel accords to him. We can scarcely set a limit to the gratitude and love which we owe to him. The debt is exceeded only by that which we owe to Him who 'so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.' We honor him as one who bore the nearest resemblance that a created and dependant being can bear to the Great Creator. We honor him as one in whose character was portrayed a full likeness of the moral nature of God. We honor him as one who showed in all he did that his soul was enlarged with the benevolence of God, and in all his intercourse with men, represented visibly the disposition and will of the Invisible Father. We honor him as one who 'was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.' We honor him as one whom God 'raised from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all principalities

and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.' It is the highest idea that we can form of him, and it is certainly the highest he gave of himself, that in him we see God acting; in him we hear God speaking; and in him we feel God inspiring. We look to him not only as the model and prototype of our own character, but as embodying (if we may say so), the character of God, and making it known unto the children of men by making it seen. 'From henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.'

'Go and sin no more,' said Jesus to the broken-hearted woman who had violated the law and was obnoxious to the punishment of death, — Go, and sin no more! Words of more than human clemency! Benevolence unearthly, divine! And in it we see what gives us unspeakable delight, a counterpart to the boundless clemency and benevolence of the Supreme Being! To that single act of transcendant mercy the penitent sinner may cling when all other holds of his hope are broken.

We have, then, Christianity, so far as it relates to the character of God, not simply in the teachings, the records of the discourses of the Saviour, but also, and in equal fulness, in the acts of the Saviour's life. So that when he came upon the earth, if he had only announced himself as the Image of God, and had proved the divinity of his mission as he did prove it, and had lived the life which he did live, and had left behind him no record except of the acts of that life, — none of his discourses, none of the writings of his Apostles, — we should even then have had a Revelation compared with which Natural Religion and Judaism had been as the night to the day.

1st Series. No. 87.

THE

PHILOSOPHY

OF

MAN'S SPIRITUAL NATURE

IN REGARD TO THE

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH.

BY JAMES WALKER.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

SEPTEMBER, 1834.

Price 4 Cents.

This tract is taken from the sixtyfourth number of the Christian Examiner.

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS, BOSTON.

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH.

Faith, in the sense in which I propose to use that term in the following pages, is defined in Scripture as being 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' By it we can and do regard many things, which lie beyond the sphere of our senses and actual experience, as really existing, and are affected by them as realities. By it the spiritually minded of all religious persuasions, in proportion as they are spiritually minded, feel a confidence and practical assurance in the existence and reality of the spiritual world. It is this principle which constitutes man, unlike the inferior animals, a religious being; and it is by a right developement of this principle that we become capable of seeing Him who is invisible, of being affected by those things which pertain to our inward and spiritual life as if addressed to the senses, and of holding free, intimate, and habitual communion with the Unseen, the Infinite, and the Eternal.

Now it is remarkable of the infidelity of the present day, that it strikes at the very existence of this principle, considered as an element or property of the human soul. Not content with disputing in detail the evidences of natural and revealed religion, or driven, perhaps, from this ground, it thinks to cut the matter short by denying that man has any faculties for the apprehension of spiritual existences, or of any existences but such as are cognizable by the senses, and so far as they are cognizable by the senses. I have no fears that many amongst us, or that any who are accustomed to contemplate and study the workings of their moral and spiritual nature, will be seduced and carried away by this gross form of sensualism; which they must feel and know to be contradicted and entirely set aside by the facts of their own inward experience. Still it may be well, in connexion with the evidences of Christianity, to begin by setting forth, in the simplest and clearest language of which the subject is susceptible, the true philosophy of man's moral and spiritual nature in regard to the foundations of faith.

In the present discourse I shall endeavor to establish, illustrate, and enforce, as much at length as my limits will permit, the three following propositions:

First, that a little reflection will convince every one, alive to noble thoughts and sentiments, that the *existence* of those spiritual faculties and capacities, which are assumed as the *foundation* of religion in the soul of man, is attested and put beyond controversy, by the *revelations of consciousness.*

Secondly, that *religion in the soul*, consisting as it does of a manifestation and developement of these spiritual faculties and capacities, is as much *a reality in itself*,

and enters as essentially into our idea of a perfect man, as the corresponding manifestation and developement of the reasoning faculties, a sense of justice, or the affections of sympathy and benevolence.

And *thirdly*, that, from the acknowledged existence and reality of spiritual impressions or perceptions, we may and do assume *the existence and reality of the spiritual world;* just as, from the acknowledged existence and reality of sensible impressions or perceptions, we may and do assume the existence and realities of the sensible world.

These three propositions being established, it will follow, that our conviction of the existence and reality of the spiritual world is resolvable into the same *fundamental law of belief*, as that on which our conviction of the existence and reality of the sensible world depends.

I. My first proposition is, that a little reflection will convince every one, alive to noble thoughts and sentiments, that the *existence* of those spiritual faculties and capacities, which are assumed as the *foundation* of religion in the soul of man, is attested and put beyond controversy by the *revelations of consciousness.*

Some writers contend for the existence of an unbroken chain of beings starting from the lowest form of inorganic matter, and mounting upwards by regular and insensible gradations to the highest order of created intelligences. Others insist on a division of substances into material and immaterial, and make one of the principal arguments for the soul's spirituality and immortality to depend on the nature of its substance, and not on the nature of the laws and conditions imposed upon it. Happily neither of these questions is necessarily implicated in the views I am about to offer, and both may therefore be dismissed a t

once from the discussion ; the former as being a little too fanciful, and the latter as being a little too metaphysical for the generality of minds. It is enough if persons will recognise the obvious fact, that, in the ascending scale of being, as the vegetable manifests some properties which do not belong to crude and inert matter, and as the animal manifests some properties which do not belong to the mere vegetable, so man, as man, manifests some properties which do not belong to the mere animal. He is subject, it is true, to many of the laws and conditions of crude and inert matter, to many of the laws and conditions of vegetable life, and to many of the laws and conditions of animal life ; but he also has part in a still higher life, — the life of the soul. He brings into the world the elements of a higher life, the life of the soul, the acknowledged phenomena of which can no more be resolved into the laws and conditions of mere sensation, than into those of mere vegetation, or mere gravitation. This higher life, consisting, among other things, of a developement of conscience, the sentiment of veneration, and the idea of the Perfect and the absolute, constitutes the *foundation* of religion in the soul of man, the existence and reality of which is attested, as I hold, and is put beyond controversy, by the revelations of consciousness.

I do not suppose, of course, that the existence of the abovementioned properties or affections of the soul is matter of sensation. I do not suppose that we can see, or hear, or feel, or taste, or smell a mental faculty, a moral sentiment, or an idea. Their existence, supposing them to exist, *could* be revealed to us by consciousness alone; and by consciousness it *is* revealed to us ; and the evidence of consciousness in a ques-

tion of this nature is final and decisive. It is not a matter of sensation, nor of logic; but of consciousness alone. We are conscious of their existence; and being so, whatever we may say, or however we may argue to the contrary, we cannot, practically speaking, doubt it, even if we would, any more than we can doubt the testimony of the senses. Reflect for one moment. What evidence have you of the existence of your own mind, — of the power of thought, or even of the power, or the fact, of sensation itself, but the evidence of consciousness? Nay, what evidence have you of your own individual being and personality, — that you are yourself and not another, that you are a man and not a horse or a tree, that you are awake and alive, and not asleep or dead, but the evidence of consciousness? None whatever. You can say, 'I am conscious of being what I am;' and that is all you can say. An archangel cannot say any thing more. It is not a matter of sensation, or of argument, but of consciousness alone. If, therefore, you are conscious of possessing not only a sensual and an intellectual, but also à moral and spiritual nature, you have as good evidence for believing that this moral and spiritual nature really exists, and that you possess it, as you have for believing that you exist at all.

'True,' the sensualist may say; 'this does prove the existence of something which we call our moral and spiritual nature; but it does not prove that this *something* belongs to our original coustitution, that it has its root and foundation in the soul, that it cannot be resolved into a mere figment of the brain.' And then, in the accustomed vein of this philosophy, he will be likely to urge, 'Your conscience, — what is it? One thing in the child, and another thing in the man; one thing in this

age or country, and another thing in that; here expressly forbidding what there it as expressly enjoins. And your sentiment of veneration, — what is it? Today prostrate before sticks and stones, tomorrow adoring the host of heaven; among one people, deifying a virtue, among another, a man, among another, an onion; now manifesting itself under the forms of the grossest superstition, and now breaking out into the excesses of the wildest fanaticism. And your idea of the Absolute and the Perfect, — what is it but an hallucination of the metaphysically mad, — the finite vainly thinking to comprehend the infinite? Do not all these things, therefore, though they exist, or are thought to exist, in the human mind, when a little more carefully examined, look very much like figments of the brain?'

How long is the plain, practical good sense of mankind to be abused by a sophistry like this, which owes all its apparent force and pertinency to a sort of logical slight of hand, that, with a quickness making it imperceptible to slow minds, substitutes for the real question at issue, another having nothing to do with the subject? So far as the present discussion is concerned, it matters not whether conscience, as already instructed and educated, always decides correctly, or never decides correctly. I am not contending, as every body must perceive, who is capable of understanding the argument, for the correctness or uniformity of the *decisions* of conscience, a circumstance which must depend, of course, on the nature and degree of instruction and education it has received, but for the *existence* of conscience itself, not as a figment of the brain, but as an element of our moral and spiritual nature. What I maintain is simply this; that every man is born with a moral faculty, or the elements of a moral faculty, which, on being developed, creates

in him the idea of a right and a wrong in human conduct; which leads him to ask the question, 'What is right?' or 'What *ought* I to do?' which summons him before the tribunal of his own soul for judgment on the rectitude of his purposes; which grows up into an habitual sense of personal responsibility, and thus prepares him, as his views are enlarged, to comprehend the moral government of God, and to feel his own responsibilty to God, as a moral governor. My reasonings and inferences, therefore, are not affected, one way or another, by the actual state of this or that man's conscience, or by the fact that probably no two consciences can be found which exactly agree. A man's conscience, we must presume, according to the influences under which he has acted, will be more or less excited and developed, and more or less enlightened and educated. Still we hold it to be undeniable that every man has a conscience *to be* excited and developed, enlightened and educated; that in this sense conscience has its root and foundation in the soul, and that man, herein, differs essentially from the most sagacious of the inferior animals, and, unlike them, was originally constituted *susceptible* of religion.

And so, too, of the sentiment of veneration or devotion, considered as an original and fundamental propensity of the human mind, I care not, so far as my present purpose is concerned, under what forms it has manifested itself, or to what excesses or abuses it has led. These very excesses and abuses only serve to demonstrate the existence and strength of the principle itself, as they evince such a craving of our nature for religion, that it will accept of any, even the crudest and most debasing, rather than have none. Could this be, if we were not

made to be religious? No matter what may be the immediate or ostensible object of this sentiment, — a log, a stone, or a star, the god of the hills, or the god of the plains, 'Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,' — still it is veneration, still it is devotion. Neither can the principle itself, by any show of evidence or just analysis, be resolved into a mere figment of the brain, or a mere creature of circumstances, for, in some form or other, it has manifested itself under all circumstances, and in every stage of the mind's growth, as having its root and foundation in the soul. The sentiment may be, and often has been, misdirected and perverted; but there is the sentiment still, with nothing to hinder its being excited, developed, and directed aright, and the result is religion. There is the sentiment disposing man to look upward to a higher power, and inducing faith in the invisible; a quality in which the most sagacious of the inferior animals do not share in the smallest degree, and which proves, if final causes prove any thing, that man was made for worship and adoration.

One word more respecting our capacity to form an idea of the Absolute and the Perfect. The shallow and flippant jeer, that it is the finite vainly thinking to comprehend the infinite, comes from substituting the literal sense of the term *comprehend*, as applied to bodies, for its figurative sense as applied to minds; making the comprehension of an idea to resemble the grasping or embracing of a globe with the hands or the arms. Besides, we need not say that man can, strictly speaking, *comprehend* the Absolute and the Perfect, but only that he can *apprehend* them, as really existing; and there is this difference between the literal import of apprehension and a full comprehension, that one can lay hold of what he

would not think to be able at once to clasp. However this may be, it is certain that the idea of the Infinite grows up in the human mind, as it is cultivated and expanded, and becomes an essential condition of thought. As a proof of this, let any one try, and see if he can separate the idea of infinity from his idea of space and duration; or, in other words, whether he can possibly conceive of mere space, or mere duration as otherwise than infinitely extended. Moreover, the very idea of imperfection, as such, involves at least some faint glimmering of an idea of the Perfect, with which it is compared, and without which imperfection would be to us as perfection. In other words, if we had no idea of perfection, we could have no idea of its absence, which is what we mean by imperfection. So likewise in contemplating things accidental and dependent, the idea of the Absolute grows up in the mind; — the idea of something that is *not* accidental and dependent, and on which every thing that is accidental and dependent leans and is sustained. In short, the mind of man is so constituted, that, in the full developement of its intellectual powers, it can find no real satisfaction, no resolution of its doubts and difficulties, but in the idea of the Absolute and the Perfect. Take away this idea, and existence itself becomes an enigma, a meaningless and objectless phantasm. Give us back this idea, and it again becomes a consistent, intelligible, and magnificent whole. Man, unlike the most sagacious of the inferior animals, is so constituted, that this reaching after the Absolute and the Perfect enters into and forms an essential element of his moral and spiritual nature, giving him not only a capacity but a predisposition for that faith which is 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.'

Therefore do we say, and say confidently, that a foundation for religion is laid in the soul of man, the existence whereof is attested and put beyond controversy by the revelations of consciousness. This is my first proposition, and I have only to add in respect to it two brief suggestions. If, as we have seen, a foundation for religion is laid in the soul of man, can we bring ourselves to believe for one moment, that it is laid there for nothing? And again, if, as we have seen, a foundation for a higher life than that of the senses is laid in the soul of man, must it not be accounted a sort of insanity in us, to say nothing of its sinfulness, to refuse or neglect to build upon it?

II. Here my second proposition comes in, which asserts that *religion in the soul*, consisting as it does of a manifestation and developement of our spiritual faculties and capacities, is as much *a reality in itself, and enters as essentially into the idea of a perfect man*, as the corresponding manifestation and developement of the reasoning powers, a sense of justice, or the affections of sympathy and benevolence.

Modern philosophy has revived an important distinction, much insisted on by the old writers, between what is *subjectively* true and real, that is to say, true and real so far as the mind itself is concerned, and what is *objectively* true and real, that is to say, true and real independently of the mind. Thus we affirm of things, the existence of which is reported by the senses, that they really exist both subjectively and objectively; that is to say, that the mind is really affected as if they existed, and that, independently of this affection of the mind, the things themselves exist. In other words, we have an idea of the thing really existing *in* the mind,

and this is subjective truth and reality; and there is also an object answering to that idea really existing *out of* the mind, and this is objective truth and reality. One sense, therefore, there certainly is, in which the most inveterate skeptic must allow that religion has a real and true existence to the really and truly devout. Subjectively it is real and true, whether objectively it is real and true, or not. All must admit that it is true and real so far as the mind itself is concerned, even though it cannot be shown to have existence independently of the mind. It is a habit or disposition of soul, and, in any view of the matter, the habit or disposition truly and really exists. It is a developement of our nature, a developement of character, and, as such, is as true and real as any other developement of nature and character. Even if it feeds on illusions, it is not itself an illusion. Even if, in its springing up, it depends on nothing better than a fancy, a dream, — its growth in the soul, and the fruits of that growth, are realities, — all-important, all-sustaining realities.

I dwell on this distinction, because it is one which the sensualists, from policy or perversity, would fain wink out of sight, making the question at issue to be, Whether religion is, or is not, a mere illusion. This is not the question. Take any view of the matter, take the sensualist's view of the matter, and still it is undeniable that religion itself, as it exists in the soul of the devout, is a reality, as much so as any other habit or disposition of soul, as much so as taste, or conscience, or parental or filial affection; and its effects are as real.

Nor is this all. Religion in the soul enters essentially into our idea of a *perfect man*. Suppose a man perfect

in his limbs, features, and bodily proportions, but entirely destitute of understanding; — would he answer to any body's idea of a perfect man? No. Give him, then, a perfect understanding, but still let him be entirely destitute of moral sensibility, — as dead to sentiment as before he was to thought, — would he answer to any body's idea of a perfect man? No. And why not? Because we mean by a perfect man, one in whom the whole nature of man is developed, in its proper order, and just relations and proportions. Now, as has been demonstrated, a foundation for *religion* is laid in the human soul. In other words, we have spiritual faculties and capacities, as well as intellectual and moral faculties and capacities; and the former constitute a part of our nature as truly as the latter; and this part of our nature must be developed. Otherwise the entire man is not put forth. Part of his nature, and of his higher nature too, it may be said, is yet to be born; and thus it is, that a deep and true philosophy reässerts and confirms the Christian doctrine of regeneration. We are born, at first, into the visible or sensible world; when we become alive to the invisible or spiritual world, we may be said to be born again; and it is not till after this second birth that we become all which, as men, we are capable of becoming. It is not, I repeat it, until after this second birth, consisting, as I have said, in a developement of our spiritual faculties and capacities, that the entire man is revealed, or our idea of a perfect man realized or approached.

Every well constituted mind must be painfully conscious of this truth, though often without being aware of the cause of its uneasiness, in reading the lives, or

contemplating the fame, of men of eminence, and sometimes perhaps of integrity and philanthropy, but destitute of religion. Doubtless a man may have some of the forms of greatness and goodness, without having all; and nothing can be further from my purpose or disposition than to derogate from any form of either, wherever found and however connected. Still, when we behold a manifestation of the lower forms of greatness and goodness without the higher, an impression is left on the mind similar to what is universally felt on seeing a foundation laid for a noble structure, and that structure carried up far enough with the richest materials to indicate the grand and comprehensive plan of the architect, which plan however from some cause has been interrupted and broken off midway.

Thus far have I reasoned, as you will perceive, from what consciousness attests and puts beyond controversy respecting the moral and spiritual nature of man. Waiving the question whether any thing exits *out of* the mind corresponding to our idea of religion *in* the mind,—waiving the question whether the objects of our faith have a true and real existence independently of the mind itself, still the conclusion, as we have seen, is unavoidable, that this faith has its foundation in human nature, that its developement is a true and real developement of our nature, and that it is absolutely essential to our nature's entire and perfect developement. Whether religion exists independently of the mind or not, we know that to those who have it, it has a true and real existence *in the mind;* that it is a source of true and real strength, solace, and hope; and that men, as men, can truly and really do, bear, and enjoy with it, what they could not do, bear, or enjoy without

it. Even, therefore, if the discussion were to stop here, it would follow incontestably, that to disown or neglect religion because of this or that real or supposed logical difficulty, would be to do violence at the same time to both those instinctive desires, from one or the other of which, it is said, a rational being, as such, must always act, — a desire of happiness and a desire of perfection.

III. But the discussion does not stop here. I maintain, and this is my third and last proposition, that from the acknowledged existence and reality of spiritual impressions or perceptions we may and do assume *the existence and reality of the spiritual world;* just as, from the acknowledged existence and reality of sensible impressions or perceptions, we may and do assume the existence and reality of the sensible world.

Most of you, I presume, are apprised of the extravagances of skepticism into which men have been betrayed by insisting on a *kind* of evidence of which the nature of the case does not admit. Some have denied the existence of the spiritual world; others have denied the existence of the sensible world; and others again have denied the existence of both worlds, contending for that of impressions or perceptions alone. These last, if we are to believe in nothing but the facts of sensation, and what can be *logically* deduced from these facts, are unquestionably the only consistent reasoners. For what logical connexion is there between a fact of sensation, between an impression or perception, and the real existence of its object, or of the mind that is conscious of it? None whatever. I do not mean that a consistent reasoner will hesitate to admit the real existence of the objects of sensation. Practically speaking he cannot help

admitting their real existence, if he would. Every man, woman, and child believes in his or her own existence, and in that of the outward universe or sensible world; but not because the existence of either is susceptible of proof by a process of reasoning. Not the semblance, not the shadow of a sound logical argument can be adduced in proof of our own existence, or that of the outward universe. We believe in the existence of both, it is true; but it is only because we are so constituted as to make it a matter of intuition. Let it be distinctly understood, therefore, that our conviction of the existence of the sensible world does not rest on a logical deduction from the facts of sensation, or of sensation and consciousness. It rests on the constitution of our nature. It is resolvable into a fundamental law of belief. It is held, not as a logical inference, but as a first principle. With the faculties we possess, and in the circumstances in which we are placed, the idea grows up in the mind, and we cannot expel it if we would.

Now the question arises, On what does a devout man's conviction of the existence and reality of the *spiritual world* depend? I answer; — On the very same. He is conscious of spiritual impressions or perceptions, as he also is of sensible impressions or perceptions; but he does not think to demonstrate the existence and reality of the objects of either by a process of reasoning. He does not take the facts of his inward experience, and hold to the existence and reality of the spiritual world as a logical deduction from these facts, but as an intuitive suggestion grounded on these facts. He believes in the existence and reality of the spiritual world, just as he believes in his own existence and reality, and just as he

believes in the existence and reality of the outward universe, — simply and solely because he is so constituted that with his impressions or perceptions he cannot help it. If he could, it would be to begin by assuming it to be possible that his faculties, though in a sound state and rightly circumstanced, may play him false ; and if he could begin by assuming this as barely possible, there would be an end to all certainty. Demonstration itself, ocular or mathematical, would no longer be ground of certainty. It is said that sophistical reasoning has sometimes been resorted to in proof of the existence and reality of the spiritual world ; and this perhaps is true ; but the error has consisted in supposing that any reasoning is necessary. It is not necessary that a devout man's conviction of the existence and reality of the spiritual world should rest on more or on better evidence, than his conviction of the existence and reality of the sensible world ; it is enough that it rests on as much, and on the very same. It is enough that both are resolvable, as I have shown, into the same fundamental law of belief ; and that, in philosophy as well as in fact, this law ought to exclude all doubt in the former case, as well as in the latter.

But how, it may be asked, according to the views here presented, can we account for the fact of such different and conflicting spiritual impressions or perceptions ? If a spiritual world really exists, why do not all men apprehend it alike ? Because, I hardly need reply, it is contemplated under such widely different aspects, and by persons whose spiritual faculties and capacities are variously developed, and, above all, because in spiritual things the best people are so prone to mix up and confound their inferences with their simple perceptions. There is nothing, therefore, in the real or apparent diversity of

our spiritual impressions or perceptions, which should shake our confidence in the principle that, to a rightly constituted and fully developed soul, moral and spiritual truth will be revealed with a degree of intuitive clearness and certainty, equal at least to that of the objects of sense. Besides, a like diversity in our views and theories prevails in respect to the material world; but nobody thinks, merely on the strength of this, seriously to raise a doubt whether the material world exists at all. And if it is further urged, that the most spiritual men may sometimes be tempted to say of their religious experience, 'Perhaps it may turn out to be an illusion;' it should be recollected, that this is no more than what they may also, in moments of inquietude and despondency, be tempted to say of *all* their experience. They may say of all their experience, 'Perhaps it may turn out to be an illusion.' At this very moment, when I seem to myself tobe writing a discourse on the Christian evidences, how do I know but that really I am in my bed dreaming about it? We may talk in this way, I know, about dreams, illusions, visions; but it is certain that, to a well constituted and well ordered mind, it never has occasioned any real doubt or difficulty, nor ever can, in regard to ordinary life; and for the same reason neither ought it to do so in regard to the life of the soul.

Once more. What, according to the doctrine advocated in these pages, shall we reply to those who may affirm that they never had any of our alleged spiritual impressions or perceptions? Precisely what we should to those who might say that they never had any of our alleged moral impressions or perceptions, any sense of justice, or honor, or disinterested benevolence, or natural

affection. We should reply, — that we are very sorry for it. If, however, along with their skepticism they evince any love of the truth, any desire or willingness to have their doubts dispelled, any tenderness of conscience or of soul, we may reason with them, and not without some prospect of convincing them, that their want of faith is to be ascribed to one or both of the two following causes; — either to a vicious or defective developement of their nature, or to their insisting on a kind of evidence of which the subject, from its very nature, is not susceptible. Either, from some defect or vice of their peculiar moral constitution or training they are not prepared to appreciate the only appropriate or possible evidence in the case; or, from ignorance of true philosophy, they require the sort of evidence for truths addressed to one faculty, which is available only in regard to truths addressed to another. By insisting on these topics, it is not improbable, that many apparent Atheists may be reclaimed. 'In days of crisis and agitation,' says an eminent French philosopher, 'together with reflection, doubt and skepticism enter into the minds of many excellent men who sigh over and are affrighted at their own incredulity. I would undertake their defence against themselves; I would prove to them that they always place faith in something. . . . . When the scholar has denied the existence of God, hear the man; ask *him*, take him at unawares, and you will see that all his words imply the idea of God; and that faith in God is, without his knowledge, at the bottom of his heart.'*

*Cousin's *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, pp. 179, 180.

As for the rest, the propagandists of atheism, the men who *love* atheism from eccentricity, or misanthropy, or deadness of soul, — I say it with submission, but I say it with the utmost possible confidence in the wisdom of the course, *Let them alone.* Conversion by the ordinary modes of instruction and argument is precluded. Gratify them not with a few short days of that notoriety which they so much covet. Leave them to the natural influences of their system ; leave them to the silent disgust which their excesses must awaken in a community not absolutely savage ; leave them to the cant and priestcraft of a few ignorant and interested leaders : and it is not perhaps entirely past all hope that, in this way, some of them may be so far reclaimed as to become ashamed of their cause, ashamed of one another, and ashamed of themselves.

Meanwhile, let us hope that a better philosophy than the degrading sensualism, out of which most forms of modern infidelity have grown, will prevail ; and that the minds of the rising generation will be thoroughly imbued with it. Let it be a philosophy which recognises the higher nature of man, and aims in a chastened and reverential spirit to unfold the mysteries of his higher life. Let it be a philosophy which comprehends the soul, — a soul susceptible of religion, of the sublime principle of faith, of a faith which 'entereth into that within the veil.' Let it be a philosophy which continually reminds us of our intimate relationship to the spiritual world, which opens to us new sources of strength in temptation, new sources of consolation in trouble, and new sources of life in death, — nay, which teaches us that what we call *death* is but the dying of all that is mortal, that nothing

but life may remain. Let it be a philosophy which prepares us to expect extraordinary manifestations of our heavenly Father's love and care, and which harmonizes perfectly with the sublime moral purpose and meaning of the Gospel, 'casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

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THE

EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

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PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

October, 1834.

Price 4 *Cents.*

This Essay was originally published in the Unitarian Advocate, printed in Boston, and, afterwards, in a separate form for the author's friends. It is now, by his consent, added to this series of Tracts.

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS, BOSTON.

THE

EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

PART FIRST.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

The Christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer in procuring the favor and help of Almighty God, was one which laid very near the hearts of our ancestors. It was with them for support and guidance, in all their trials in placing the foundations of civil authority and social order in this then new world; and was as a 'wall of fire' around them, amidst a thousand evils felt and feared in their daily walk. It has not become obsolete in this more prosperous, but less devotedly religious period. And it is matter of congratulation, that it is, ordinarily, and has been, in an especial manner, on a recent occasion,* recognised in the councils of the government under which we live. Long may it be thus recognised; and distant,

* An allusion is here made to a Proclamation for a day of Fasting and Prayer by the Governor of Massachusetts, on account of the appearance of the *Cholera* in this section of the Country.

far distant be the day, when it shall, in any measure, lose its hold upon the minds either of the rulers or the people.

But still it is sufficiently obvious that this doctrine is not always, perhaps not generally, well understood; that it is often mingled with much doubt in the minds of those who professedly receive it; and that, sometimes, it is referred to in conversation, and even in some few of our public prints, we regret to say, in a tone of flippant remark, which, as a matter of taste merely, as well as in decent respect to other minds, might well be spared; and which certainly would be spared, were there a better understanding of the subject.

For what doctrine of our religion is important if this be not? If prayer considered as a 'request made known to God,' have no efficacy in procuring His favor, why do we pray? Why do we assemble ourselves together on ordinary, or on extraordinary occasions, in our houses of worship, to go through, even so imperfectly as we do, our devotional petitions there? What dead, empty, and worse than unmeaning forms are these, as it respects ourselves? What an impious mockery as it respects our God? Well might the scoffer, the sceptic, the half or no believer, in beholding these religious offerings, adopt the cutting irony of the Prophet towards the idolaters of Baal, and say to us poor deluded worshippers 'Cry aloud, for he is a God, either he is talking or pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked,' since there is none to answer, and none who regardeth our prayers.

And, if our petitions are unheard and unanswered in heaven, what is our reliance, what our hope, in the

gloomy passages of life, when friends sicken or die around us, or we ourselves are overwhelmed by infirmity and distress, or are brought to the grave's brink, and there is no longer support or comfort on the earth? Alas! there is none. The dark and fearful way is before us, and we must pursue it alone, 'with no eye to pity, and no hand to save.' Does not the consciousness of many respond to our words, when we say, that there is a privilege in the 'prayer of faith,' in the communion of the trusting heart with God, whose preciousness no language can describe; which is more and better than any or every earthly blessing, and which is sufficient to strengthen and support us in the loss of them all?

It may be proper to explain, at the outset of this inquiry, what we understand by the Efficacy of Prayer. Of its importance, viewed merely as an instrumental duty, as a means of exciting and cherishing devout affections and sentiments, and of aiding us to live a holy life, none can think more highly than we. These are the natural consequences of prayer, that is, those which result from the well-known principles of the human mind, and concerning which there is little difference of opinion. But, by the term Efficacy of Prayer, in these remarks, we would be understood to maintain, *that it is a means of obtaining the specific favor and help of God, both in regard to our spiritual and temporal welfare, which we may not expect to receive without it.*

In the remarks which will follow, we shall attempt, in the first place, to meet and answer those objections against the Christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer, which are thought to be most valid and important; and next advert to some of those facts and arguments, by

which, as we think, a positive belief of the doctrine is fully sustained. In doing this, we are very content to waive all claims to originality. Our aim is far higher. It is to stamp on other minds those convictions respecting this subject, which are inexpressibly dear to our own; and we shall freely and gladly employ, for this purpose, the best resources at our command.

Our first object, and we wish it should be here kept distinctly in view, is to answer the prominent *Objections*, which are supposed to lie against the doctrine.

One of the objections which is urged against the Efficacy of Prayer, and one, which, it would seem, from the positive and triumphant air with which it is urged, is considered as decisive, is derived from the *Immutability of the laws of nature*, as they are called; or that connected series of facts or events denominated cause and effect, by which the material universe is governed. It is said that these causes and effects are permanent, that they are modes of operation, by which the order and harmony of the world around us is preserved, and that it is most unphilosophical to think that this settled order can be broken in upon in answer to our prayers. We believe this to be a full and fair statement of the objection.

And now what is its value in opposition to the Christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer? Nothing, as we apprehend, absolutely nothing at all. And for this reason. All that is or can be claimed for the permanency of the physical laws of the universe, may be granted, and yet the doctrine remain untouched. The constancy of these laws is admitted. It is true, that in the visible creation, certain effects do invariably follow certain causes. They have never been

known to fail, except by a miraculous interposition of the Deity. Night follows day, and day night. The seasons preserve their distinct periods of succession. Cold chills and fire burns. Heavy bodies, if unimpeded, fall to the earth. Water seeks a level. Food nourishes, and the want of it kills. These, and many other causes and effects are permanent. We may not hope to interrupt or suspend their operation by our prayers. No petitions will avail to set them aside. It were superstition, or fanaticism, or madness, to expect, by the most fervent prayers of all the holy spirits who are or who have been on the earth, to interfere with this permanent order of the physical world. And yet, notwithstanding all this, we hold in an undoubting faith, the doctrine of the Efficacy of our Prayers, or, to use the language of another, of 'an influence from above, as diversified and unceasing as are the requests from below.'

But is there nothing irreconcilable between the two doctrines? We answer, no. And here it is that the objection falls pointless to the ground. For if it can be shown or rendered probable, that a provision is made for an answer to our prayers, above and beyond that settled arrangement of causes and effects which we see around us; in other words, that our prayers may have an efficacy *without interfering with this arrangement;* then, it is obvious, that an objection drawn from the permanency of this arrangement, is nothing worth.

Now that such an arrangement may exist, is plain from the fact that we can trace the chain of causes and effects only to a certain distance, and this a very short one. We may see the connexion of one event with another, or rather, to speak more truly and philosophically, we may

see that one event regularly precedes another, and this a third, and this, it may be, a fourth; but we soon arrive at a point, beyond which, nothing further is or can be known. All our investigations and all our philosophy end here. But not so the series of events. The chain of causes and effects, as we call them, is continued on, and on, beyond this point, through unknown gradations, far, far beyond all human ken, until it reaches the cause of causes, the great First Cause. What prevents, then, that God may, by an express act of His omnipotent power, or by putting in operation certain unknown agents, or by giving a peculiar direction to some of these unknown but not less real causes, produce a certain result in answer to our prayers? And is it not plain, further, that this may be done, not only by not interfering with, or interrupting, or suspending the permanency of known causes and effects, *but by using these very causes and effects, as a part of his appointed means in producing this result?* The impulse, by which an event is finally made to take place, in answer to prayer, may be given, not at that part of the series which is within our observation, where such an interference would be miraculous, but at that part of the series, which is without and beyond our observation, without interfering with the permanency of nature, as it is called, in the slightest degree. It is thus a special providence may be established for the peculiar wants of every thing that lives, from the seraph who bows before the unveiled glories of the throne of God, down to the meanest reptile; and thus it is too, that provision may be made for an answer to every prayer. It is thus we may reconcile our belief of this doctrine with the permanency of nature. It is thus our Faith and our Philosophy go hand in hand.

It may be worth while to illustrate these reasonings by an example; and we will take one from the event which led our thoughts particularly to this subject. Is there any objection to the Efficacy of Prayer for health, or preservation from disease, to be founded on the fact that the operations of nature are fixed and uniform? Certainly not, as we maintain, and for the precise reason above stated. The knowledge of those causes, on which health and sickness depend, is very limited. Those who have made this subject a study, will tell you that all their skill is summed up in a knowledge of some facts, fewer or more, but at the greatest extent very limited, which are ordinarily found in connexion with each other, and which, as has been repeatedly said, are hence called cause and effect. He will further tell you, if he is an intelligent man, that above and beyond all these, there are agencies at work, of which he knows nothing; and that of the ultimate, or original cause of sickness or death, he is wholly ignorant. Some of the last steps or stages of the process, which he calls proximate causes, he may know or think he knows, but nothing beyond. In respect, for instance, to that pestilence, to avert which, our people, and, as we think very properly, have been recently called together to unite their prayers, what is known, we do not ask merely of its remote causes, but of its proximate or immediate causes? Certain circumstances, it seems, have been satisfactorily ascertained to predispose to the reception of it; but of the efficient, the producing cause, and of the methods of its propagation, there is great controversy, at least, even among those who profess to know the most concerning it. Now, and this is the point on which we would fasten attention, is

there not room enough amidst these unknown causes of the pestilence, for God to interpose His helping and preserving hand, without interfering with the permanency of the known laws of nature? Suppose these causes to be certain changes, taints or miasms in the atmosphere. They are not palpable. They are not visible. They cannot be analyzed. They defy the chemist's skill. Might they not, then, be altered, arrested, removed by our God, and this, too, if He pleased, in direct answer to our prayers, without interfering with the known laws of nature? Nay, might not this be done, as was before suggested, by the agency of these very laws; by causing any one of the elements to act as an antagonist principle, or as an antidote to this poisonous influence which pervades them; and this, without our knowing that this beneficial agency was thus exerted, except from its beneficial effects? Is there not a vast variety of atmospherical influences thus daily put in motion? Could we desire a better example to show, may we not now call it, the utter futility of the objection against the Efficacy of Prayer, which is derived from the alleged permanency of nature. And do we not see that it is entirely resolvable into narrow views, on the part of the objector, of the providence of God; and that the christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer, is, in fact, coincident with the highest and best philosophy?

We think we may consider this answer to the objection before us, ample and complete. But as it may not strike other minds as it does ours, we proceed to offer, as briefly as possible, another, which we deem equally decisive. It cannot have escaped the observation of any who have given their attention to the subject, that there

are two great classes of events, both in the physical and moral world, which are distinguishable and clearly marked. In the first place, there are those which occur according to a known and established order, which obey what are called the permanent laws of nature; those very laws, which are thought to be broken in upon by the doctrine under remark. But, beside events which thus regularly follow in succession, there is another class, which appear to obey no prescribed law, and to follow no regular order in their occurrence. These are what men call accidents, fortuitous events, the effects of chance or fortune. But what do they mean by these terms? Is it anything but this, that they do not, like the events above referred to, obey any known rule, that is, any rule known to them? But no one who has any just views of a superintending God, can believe they take place without his knowledge and supervision; that, like all other events, they are finally to be traced to Him. Accidents though we call them, and trifling though they may be in themselves, they are yet continually deciding the most momentous interests. All history is full of examples of this fact. Battles are won or lost, thrones set up or overturned; dynasties founded or destroyed, the greatest discoveries made or missed, by circumstances as apparently fortuitous, and sometimes, also, of as little intrinsic importance as the turning of a die. He too, who will look back upon the history of his past life, or of the past year, will find that his fortunes have often turned on similar occurrences. Can we hesitate to admit, then, for a moment, that events like these are under the supervision and direction of Him in whom we live and have our being? If so, it is obvious, and here again we would

ask the especial attention of the reader, that these may be directed in answer to our prayers, without infringing or interrupting any of the known laws of nature, since they are wholly independent of their control. And, as they are thus directly to be ascribed to God, and are thus under His direct agency, and do thus seriously affect the destinies of men, is it irrational to infer, that it is by means of these chances or accidents, as we call them, that God prepares an especial moral discipline for every individual who lives? However this may be, it is plainly evident, and this is all we are now concerned to maintain, that he *may* thus answer the prayers of every individual, without at all deviating from the established course of nature. 'Herein,' as has been well said, 'especially is manifested the perfection of the Divine wisdom, that the most surprising conjunctions of events are brought about by the simplest means, and in a manner that is perfectly in harmony with the ordinary course of human affairs. This is, in fact, the great miracle of Providence — that no miracles are needed to accomplish its purposes.'

Enough, and probably more than enough attention has been given to this alleged objection; but we have another reply, which to us seems, in itself, so decisive, that it may be proper to suggest it before leaving the subject. It is founded on the well-known fact, that thoughts and suggestions are continually rising in the mind, which observe no known law, which come and depart, wholly independently of our volitions, and whose origin, character and continuance are all beyond our comprehension. There is no part, perhaps, of that dark and yet unexplored subject, the human mind, which baffles in-

quiry more than those laws of association by which its different thoughts, feelings or states are connected together. It is a well-known fact, too, that some of the fairest and most splendid creations of genius, and some of the greatest discoveries in every department of human knowledge, have been in this way originally suggested. Men call this fortuitous, accidental; by which they must mean, if they mean anything, as we have already said, that these elementary suggestions or hints come from some unknown cause. But the cause, though unknown to them, cannot be unknown to God. May He not then, and this, again, is the precise point to be attended to, may He not use these unknown methods of operating upon the human mind, to bring about any result which to Him seemeth good; and this, too, without interfering with, or suspending, for an instant, any of the known or permanent laws of nature? May he not thus send an answer of acceptance, or gracious return, to any prayer? May He not, to take an example before alluded to, send a thought or suggestion into any mind, which being arrested and dwelt upon by the individual, would lead to a precise knowledge, and furnish a complete antidote or cure of that pestilence which is 'walking in darkness,' in the midst of us? In what other way, or by what other agency, to adduce one instance out of many, was the great discovery of Vaccination originated and carried out into beneficent results? Let the atheist, if he please, call it accident; but he who believes in the superintending care of God, will regard it as His gracious work. Here then is one more method by which the 'Hearer of prayer' may give an express answer to our petition, not only without interfering, in the slightest degree, with

the known and permanent laws of His universe, but even through the ministry of those very laws. And as the whole weight of the objection before us rests upon the assumption that this cannot be done, the inference seems to be inevitable, that the objection is altogether worthless.

We have contented ourselves, thus far, with showing that God *may* send answers of acceptance to our prayers, without interfering with the known laws of nature. This is sufficient for our present purpose. It fully meets the objection before us. But we might, if it were deemed necessary, go further and assert, that it is highly probable that He *does* thus act by an agency independently of these general laws. These are necessary to the well being of men, that they may be enabled to act in reference to the future with foresight and calculation. This is their final cause or end. But there is no reason for supposing that the same system of general laws continues beyond the point where this final cause or end terminates. If, on the contrary, it be probable that there are many cases, in which the gracious purpose of God, in regard to man, may be best effected, without this agency of general laws, in the sphere beyond man's observation, then it is in the same degree probable, that He will thus act. Now, in point of fact, this probability is very strong. The blind and unbending effect of general laws, may, in a great variety of particular instances, produce more evil than good. Indeed, in the great variety and complexity of events in human life, it must be so. And, as we cannot suppose that the final results of any act of God will be evil, in all these cases, it is highly probable that He will thus act independently of the known and obvious laws of creation, to counteract that

overbalance of evil, which would result from the uncontrolled effect of these general laws.

We proceed now to advert to some other leading objections against the Efficacy of Prayer which are sometimes thought to be of importance. But as they are carefully examined in the leading treatises on this subject, we shall spare ourselves much detail. As the former objection was derived from the permanency of the laws of Creation, so these are derived from the inherent perfections of the Creator. Thus, *God*, it is said, *is infinitely wise, and knows better than we do ourselves what we really need, and that prayer, therefore, in this point of view, must be useless.* The simple answer to this is, that it is no object of prayer to give *information* to the omniscient God. And, as this is not the Efficacy which is claimed for Prayer, it appears to be very irrelevant to deny such an efficacy.

Again, it is said, *God is unchangeable, and that therefore it is a mere presumption to imagine that we may prevail upon Him by our importunities.* The reply is, that we do not attempt or expect to make any change in the *essential character* of God by our prayers. And if it be asked what we do expect, we reply, it is not unreasonable to believe, that, if we make a *change in our conduct and relations towards Him*, He will make a *change in His treatment of us.* It is no part of our present business, as we have said, to show the grounds of our belief in the Efficacy of Prayer, but we may just intimate here, that if it be necessarily fit and proper that dependent beings should humbly seek of God the blessings they constantly need; then it is necessarily fit and proper that God should regard these requests; and that He should make a difference, in his treatment, between those who

make these requests, and those who make them not. If this be a mark of changeableness in the Deity, then every distinction, that He does or will make in this world or in the next, between those who comply with the conditions on which His favor is promised, and those who do not, is also a mark of changeableness. The fallacy of the objection lies in confounding the *absolute perfections* of God, considered as the inherent principles of His nature, and the *exercise* of those perfections in His relation to us as our moral Governor. His unchangeableness, as it respects us, consists not in acting towards us always in the same manner, whatever be our conduct towards Him, but in doing always what is right, and, of course, in varying His treatment of His children and subjects, according to their desert. If, then, the due offering of prayer to God, makes an alteration in the case of the suppliant, as, if it be a fulfilment of an absolute duty, made known both by reason and Scripture, it necessarily must; then, as has been well argued, His disregard of prayer would be an instance of changeableness in Him, and not his hearing and answering it. In this case, as in all those now referred to, we do not expect, to influence by any prayer of ours, the *essential character of God*, but we are encouraged, both by reason and Scripture to hope, that by making a change in our qualifications, we may make a change in his treatment of us.

How very unimportant this objection is, will further appear, by applying the same mode of reasoning to any other moral or religious duty, which is considered a means of procuring divine favor. You restrain prayer before God, because he is essentially unchangeable in His character, and no solicitations or homage of yours can influence Him. Why do you not extend your rea-

sonings to every other duty? Let us apply it, by way of illustration to that of Repentance. Why should you repent of your iniquities? God is unchangeable, and therefore all you can do must be unavailing. If you urge that it is right, in itself, that sinful creatures should gain a newness of heart and life, to ensure the favor of a holy God; we reply, that this is true, but that it is not more so than that prayer in a dependent creature is right in itself. If you urge that repentance is expressly commanded, we answer, so is prayer, and by the same authority. If, yet further, you urge that repentance is an express condition of obtaining God's favorable regard, we still reply, so is prayer. If therefore you reject this duty on the ground of God's unchangeableness, then be consistent, and reject every other means of obtaining His favor, on the same ground. But the difficulty does not stop here. The objection which is thus brought against prayer, lies with equal strength against every other human effort. The duration of our lives, and all the circumstances of life, are known to God, and nothing which we can do, can effect his unchangeable purposes. But are we, on this account, to take no precautions for our continuance, safety and well-being? If this reasoning be plainly unsound, when applied to all these subjects, it is equally so, when applied to prayer. The objection proves too much, and is, therefore, of no moment. God is omniscient and unchangeable. This is admitted. But in His wisdom, and in His mercy, as we believe, He has appointed certain conditions, on the performance of which He will give or withhold his favor. There is something to be done by us before we can receive the promised boon. If we do not comply with the condition,

it is presumption to expect the desired result. If we do, then we may humbly but yet confidently rely on the faithfulness of Him who hath promised. And this, as we have said, is as true of prayer as of every other duty.

We take leave of this part of the subject here. We have remarked upon all those objections to the Efficacy of Prayer, which are believed to be of any importance. And we have dwelt thus, at length, upon these, not because they are considered of any great weight in themselves; but because if they be allowed to go into general circulation, in the world abroad, and to pass through the mind unexamined, they will spread insensibly over this all-important part of our religious exercises, a feeling of distrust, a sort of lurking infidelity, which is most hostile to all true devotion, and will shut out the soul, as by a wall of adamant, from a near and confiding communion with its God.

PART SECOND.

EFFICACY OF PRAYER ASSERTED.

In the preceding remarks, we have attempted to answer those objections which are most frequently alleged against the Christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer. We shall now endeavor to set in order some of the more important arguments by which the doctrine is supported. Our main design in this discussion is, as we have already said, to impress upon other minds what we deem to be important truths on this exceedingly interesting

subject. We shall, therefore, in the remarks which will follow, go directly to our object, using those arguments and suggestions which appear to be soundest, and best adapted to our purpose, without being solicitous whether they be original or not.

What reason, then, have we to believe that prayer is one of the means of obtaining the help of God?

Our first remark is, that this Efficacy is *promised to our Prayers in God's revealed word.* We consider the language of Scriptures on this point to be full, decided and unequivocal. The doctrine is uniformly recognised in the old covenant and in the new. 'The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth' 'He will fulfil the desires of them that fear him, he will hear their cry, and save them.' 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him.' The fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.' 'This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' We need not, we suppose, add to these examples. Although it has been attempted to restrict their meaning to certain persons, times and circumstances, yet we see no good reason for doing so, which would not apply to any other exhortation, precept or promise of the Scriptures. This is especially true of the direction and promise of our Saviour above quoted, which do not seem, according to the acknowledged rules of interpretation, to admit of a meaning which restricts them to his immediate disciples. Indeed, by the words, 'how much more shall he give good things *to them that ask him?*' he seems to render encouragement to prayer as general as words can make it.

And again, when he directed his followers to pray, and gave them a form as a model, can we believe he intended to prescribe an act and a form, which he knew to be useless and unavailing? And when, in this form, he inserted certain direct petitions, both for spiritual and temporal blessings, thereby exciting an expectation, in the minds of his followers, that their petitions would be regarded by the Hearer of prayer, can we believe that he knew, all the while, that they would not be regarded? Would this be ingenuous? Would it be *like* our Saviour, thus to mock and deceive those, who, in meekness and in confidence, looked to him for counsel and direction in a matter so solemn as this? We think, then, it is assuming nothing to say, that this argument from the Scriptures is decisive; and that he, therefore, who receives them as containing a revelation from God, and reflects seriously on the import of the passages above cited, as well as on the general tenor of their language in reference to this subject, must admit, that whatever difficulties may attend the subject, in other respects, the doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer is a doctrine taught of God.

But, further, it is a doctrine which does not rest upon authority merely. *It is, in itself, entirely rational.* And in the first place, we would inquire, whether it is not altogether fitting and proper that weak and imperfect creatures should bow down in adoration before Him who is clothed with infinitely adorable attributes? That dependent beings should acknowledge their dependence? That he who receives from God all that he is, or has, or hopes for, should gratefully acknowledge His favors? That he who is conscious of his many sins and much estrangement from his Heavenly Benefactor and Friend, should supplicate His pardoning mercy? And, especial-

ly, that he who feels his need of aid from above, at every step he takes, and with every breath he breathes, should implore this aid? Is not all this, in the highest degree, fitting and proper? Are not these dispositions and these acts considered rational and right in the ordinary relations of life, and towards earthly benefactors? And shall they not be esteemed so in reference to our God, with whom our relations are infinitely more near and close than with any other being, and whose benefits are infinitely greater? Suppose they were not prescribed, yet would not the natural unperverted reason of man lead him to their observance? If, then, they are thus right and proper in themselves, is it not reasonable to suppose that he who performs them worthily, does thereby render himself more an object of God's favor, than he who performs them not? Are not the relations of the suppliant with his Maker favorably changed by these very acts? Must he not be more the object of complacent regard, in the sight of his God, than he was before? And is it not reasonable to suppose, that in the bestowment of heavenly gifts, his well-deserving, in this respect, shall come up in gracious recognition before the Hearer of prayer, and become the means of procuring favors not granted to those who neglect a duty thus fitting and proper?

And there is another aspect of this subject, which leads to the same conclusion. Prayer is a native instinct of the human soul. It is rendered necessary, by the very natures which God has given us; and prayer, let it be marked in connexion with this, involves necessarily the belief, that if duly offered, it will be heard. And hence we infer, *that being thus a necessary part of our natures, it is not implanted in vain; and thus necessarily involv-*

ing this belief, it will not be disappointed. Both these positions, we think, must be admitted, and if true, the inference from them inevitably follows. Prayer, in all the different parts of the exercise, *is* thus natural to the constitution of human nature. It is natural to the heart, to bow down in adoration, before transcendant excellence. It is natural to the heart, to overflow with gratitude, in the reception of countless blessings, or at least, in the reception of great and unexpected favors. It is natural to the heart, to be wrung with penitential sorrow, under the consciousness of guilt. And it is natural to the heart, amidst evils felt and feared, to seek the aid of that Being, who alone is mighty to save. The very idea of God suggests the duty and the privilege of prayer. The voice of nature calls to prayer, even where the idea of the true God is not known. All nations, kindred, and tongues; all of all places; all of all times; all of all religions, true or false; all of all sects; all feel the strong necessity, and all join in the earnest aspirations of prayer. There beats not, at this moment, and there never did beat, beneath the sun, a human heart, that has not felt the need of prayer, and that has not sought, with or without words, the help of a known or an unknown God. However in giddy youth; or in the death-dance of a dissipated career; or in the dreadful infatuation of an over-busy life; or in the headlong indulgence of the senses and passions; this necessity of prayer may be unfelt; yet still, it is a resource, to which the spirit naturally and instinctively turns, in its dark and trying hours. Then it is felt as a strong desire of our natures. Then is it sought by an inherent impulse. Then it becomes a craving want, an irrepressible longing of the soul, and it feels that it must pray or die. And is it rational to believe that God should have

given this decided tendency to our natures, for no assignable purpose? that He should have rendered this offering of our spirits thus natural, thus necessary, and yet at the same time wholly useless? If so, it is a strange anomaly in nature. Every other natural feeling and propensity, has its object, its final cause; and can we believe that this has none? That God made man to pray, and let it be particularly noted, made him to pray in the hope and expectation that his prayers shall be heard and answered, for this is involved in the very act of prayer, and yet wholly disappoint this hope and expectation? Are we thus deluded by our God? Is it not far more rational to believe that when He thus made man to pray, an act which necessarily involves the belief that it will have an efficacy in procuring His favor, that he thereby made it an appointed means of obtaining this favor, and that it will not end in disappointment and mockery?

The doctrine then, of the Efficacy of Prayer, rests, first, on the full, express, and unequivocal declarations and injunctions of the scriptures; and especially, on the declarations and injunctions of our Saviour, and which were also enforced by his very emphatic example. It rests, secondly, on the fact, that as prayer is fitting and proper, in itself, as an offering of man to God, so it is rational to suppose that it is one of the conditions which God regards in the communication of good to men; and that he who performs it duly, therefore, as he does what is fitting and right, may reasonably expect blessings, which he who does not perform it, may not expect. It rests, thirdly, on the fact, that as it is an instinctive suggestion and want of our spirits, which is to be referred to him who created them; and as it necessarily implies the belief that our offerings will not be disregarded; it is rea-

sonable to suppose, that this call of our natures was not given to delude us, and that this belief will not be disappointed.

But, it may be asked, if prayer have this efficacy in obtaining the especial favor of God, why is it not made evident to our experience? If He indeed grant the prayer of our petition, so far, as in his wisdom, he sees to be best, why is not this fact so made known in the bestowment of the boon, as to remove all doubt on the subject? This is a question which has pressed upon many devout and anxious minds, and, on this account, deserves to be carefully considered.

And, in reply, we observe that the importance of the objection, that we have no palpable and unambiguous experience, that our prayers are answered in the manner above explained, is precisely measured by the antecedent probability, that on the supposition of our prayers possessing the efficacy claimed for them, in procuring the blessings sought, this efficacy would be thus made known. Now there are various reasons why this should not be expected. But one, which seems decisive to us, is, that it would be contrary to the analogies of divine providence in similar cases. No good effort or act is thus stamped with the immediate and visible seal of God's approbation. A certain degree of vagueness and uncertainty rests upon all the issues of human conduct, however good, and however acceptable to our great Witness and Judge. Temperance, for example, is ordinarily the means of health and prolonged life, and thus bears the mark of God's approval; but no specific indication of divine favor, follows every act of self-denial. Probity, as a general rule, secures success in business, the confidence of men, self-respect, and peace of conscience, and

is thus distinguished by the favor of God; but no immediate proof or manifestation of this, is attached to every instance of uprightness and fair dealing. Piety, in all its exercises and offices, is always, we may be sure, followed by a divine blessing; but no immediate and palpable indication of this, attends every instance of an humble reference of ourselves to God. The same is true of all similar acts and offerings, which we cannot doubt are acceptable to Him, and blessed of Him. We see, then, that it is contrary to the analogies of his providence, in the present state, that He should mark His approbation and acceptance of our conduct, however worthy, by any palpable, and unambiguous, and immediate tokens or evidences. He will have us act on a sense of duty, and trust to the 'faithfulness of Him who hath promised.' It would be throwing us back at once into the Jewish dispensation, if 'voices out of heaven' were to 'instruct' us at each step of our earthly pilgrimage. He has placed us under a more liberal discipline. 'Happy are they who have not seen, and yet have believed,' is His continual language to men in all events, and in the performance of every duty. What reason, then, have we to expect a different one, in regard to prayer? There seems to be none. On the contrary, it appears far more rational to conclude that, as in the bestowment of all other blessings in return for worthy conduct, the visible presence of the divine hand is not manifested; so in regard to prayer, it may be accepted and answered, and yet without any visible and palpable tokens of divine approbation. And as the objection against the Efficacy of Prayer derived from the fact that this efficacy is not distinctly marked out by God, is precisely measured by the grounds we have for think-

ing beforehand that it would be thus designated, it seems to have no solid foundation.

The answer of Paley to this objection, is different; and as, with great deference to his authority, it appears to us incomplete and unsatisfactory, we shall quote it at length, that the brief remarks we shall presume to offer upon it, may be better understood and appreciated.

'But efficacy is ascribed to prayer without the proof, we are told, which can alone in such a subject produce conviction, the confirmation of experience. Concerning the appeal to experience, I shall content myself with this remark, that if prayer were suffered to disturb the order of second causes appointed in the universe too much, or to produce its effects with the same regularity that they do, it would introduce a change into human affairs, which in some important respects would be evidently for the worse. Who, for example would labor, if his necessities could be supplied with equal certainty by prayer? How few would contain within any bounds of moderation those passions and pleasures, which at present are checked only by disease, or the dread of it, if prayer would infallibly restore health? In short, if the Efficacy of Prayer were so constant and observable as to be relied upon *beforehand*, it is easy to foresee that the conduct of mankind would, in proportion to that reliance, become careless and disorderly.'*

We have ventured to allude to this reply, as incomplete and unsatisfactory, and this, partly, because the phrase 'if prayer were suffered to disturb the order of second causes appointed in the universe *too much*,' conveys to our minds no distinct idea; but, principally, because the examples

* Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Book V. Ch. ii.

adduced of the bad consequences which would follow a visible and express efficacy attending our prayers, are all instances of petitions *unworthy in themselves*, since they do not include, on the part of the petitioner, that state of the soul, and those appropriate efforts which should always accompany his petitions. It may be readily admitted that a palpable return, or *any* return to such prayers as these, would disturb the settled order of nature, and tend to render men 'careless and disorderly.' But yet the question would recur, why should not prayers worthy in themselves, and worthily offered, as it is asserted they are efficacious in procuring the divine favor, be followed by visible tokens of this favor? In the following extract, which succeeds in immediate connexion with that already cited, a true and sufficient answer, yet different from that we have suggested, is *indicated*, and we have only to regret, that it was not illustrated by some examples, to render its meaning more precise and plain, especially in regard to that very just and important remark at the close of the quotation, 'since it appears probable, this very ambiguity is necessary to the happiness and safety of human life.'

'It is possible in the nature of things, that our prayers may, in many instances, be efficacious, and yet our experience of their efficacy be dubious and obscure. Therefore, if the light of nature instruct us by any other arguments to hope for effect from prayer; still more, if the scriptures authorize these hopes by promises of acceptance; it seems not a sufficient reason for calling in question the reality of such effects, that our observations of them are ambiguous: especially since it appears probable, that this very ambiguity is necessary to the happiness and safety of human life.'

We proceed, yet further, to observe that as we may hope and trust, our prayers for *ourselves* will have an efficacy in procuring the favor of God, so we may also hope and trust, that our intercessions for *others* will not be unheard or unanswered by our common Father in heaven. This, as in the former case, is the assurance of Scripture. Our Saviour answered the prayer of the woman of Canaan for her daughter. His own prayers were earnestly offered to God for his immediate followers, and not for 'these alone, but those also which should believe on him through their word.' The apostles made 'continual mention' of their absent friends in their prayers. They ask the prayer of their followers in their own behalf; and St. James directs his disciples, in so many words, to 'pray for one another.' As prayer then for others is enjoined, as well as prayer for ourselves, it follows that it is as rational to conclude it will have an efficacy in the one case as in the other. Besides, it is entirely analogous with the known order of providence, that the conduct of one individual, should, in manifold ways, affect the welfare of those around him, without any agency on their part; but simply by means of those connexions by which we are bound together in this life. Indeed, almost all our blessings are thus conferred by the influence of others. Why should not our prayers be one means of exercising this beneficent agency, which God will smile upon and bless? There is nothing more irrational in this, than that we should be the agents which He uses to communicate favors to others, in countless other ways. And now, in connexion with these remarks, let it be noted, that our prayers for others are as proper and fitting, taking into view the relations we bear to them, as our prayers for ourselves.

And we have, therefore, the same reason for believing that the right performance of what is thus fitting and proper will have the same efficacy in regard to others, as it has in regard to ourselves. Our prayers for others, yet further, are as natural, and therefore as necessary a dictate of the heart, as our prayers for ourselves; and it is as irrational, in the one case as in the other, to think that this natural call to prayer, should have been given in vain, and that the expectation which is necessarily involved in this prayer, that it will be heard and answered, should be delusive. And in addition to all this, may we not conceive it to be most consonant to the character of our common Father in heaven, that he should honor and reward the benevolent dispositions of his children, by hearing and answering those prayers, which in Christian love, simplicity, and sincerity, they offer for one another? Certain it is, there are many instances in which we should value such a return to our prayers, much more than any return which should be sent to us alone.

The doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer, thus explained and asserted, seems to us to be fully sustained by the Scripture, entirely rational in itself, and in perfect analogy with all else that we know of the dealings of Divine Providence. But it is, in practice, often encumbered with mistakes and perversions, which have brought discredit on the doctrine. There are two of these, which it may be expedient distinctly to point out.

One is, that in consequence of the Efficacy ascribed to Prayer, *means and efforts in reference to the blessing sought, may be omitted.* This mistake, though by no means uncommon, is too bald and obvious, we trust, to have gained much prevalence in a community like ours;

and we shall dismiss it with a very brief commentary. Prayer and effort are never to be disjoined. The Christian who will not act in furtherance of his prayers, is scarcely a less consistent being than he who will not pray in furtherance of his efforts. While we feel deeply sensible that all our ultimate dependence rests on God alone, we should labor, in the way of His appointment, as if every thing depended on our own exertions. Prayer, then, is to inspire and aid our efforts, not to supersede them. While we believe that God 'is rich to all that call upon him,' we are also to remember that it is presumption to think that He will work a miracle for any.

Another error which has prevailed to the discredit of a belief in the doctrine we maintain, is, that it has been considered as a direct *means of obtaining the particular and especial favor desired.* It is very possible, in this way, to carry the doctrine to an extreme, and render it exceptionable, and even absurd. But in asserting that there is an Efficacy belonging to Prayer, we say nothing of its precise extent, or to what precise degree it becomes a ground of divine favor. This, it is the province of the great Hearer of Prayer to determine, and is known only to Him. Much particularity in our petitions is therefore to be avoided, since the manner and the degree in which the desired blessings should be bestowed, are under a higher and infinitely better arrangement than ours. We know not, in this respect, how to pray, or what to pray for. In our darkness and blindness, and with our hearts full of fond and foolish wishes, we may ask for an apparent good, but which is, in truth, a real evil. The thought struck even a heathen, that

'We might be cursed with every granted prayer.'

Our own experience may have taught us the same. How often have we felt it to be impossible not to embody in our prayers some petition for a longed-for good, which the lapse of time and events has shown us, was withholden in mercy. And, on the other hand, that which seemed to our apprehension a harsh and cruel disappointment of our petitions, has proved, in the result, the means and the way of a before unimagined benefit. We should feel, then, that it is not for such as we to point out the paths of Providence. We should ask what we ask, with an entire submission to the will of Heaven. We should rejoice that we are not at our own disposal. We should gratefully and tenderly realize that God knows us better than we know ourselves; that He loves us better than we love ourselves; that He will do for us better than we can ask or conceive for ourselves; and that He will answer our petitions, if not according to their precise import, yet according to the import that we ourselves should give to them, were we as great and wise and good as He. We should

> 'Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
> But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice.
> Safe in His power, whose eyes discern afar
> The secret ambush of a specious prayer;
> Implore His aid, in His decisions rest,
> Secure, whate'er He gives, He gives the best.'

The doctrine which we have thus endeavored to support and explain, is, at all times, most sustaining and most consolatory. Without it our prayers will be deprived of their first object and most important significancy. But with the full assurance that they are indeed heard by Him who is mighty to save, and that they will

be answered by Him so far as is consistent with His own ineffable wisdom and goodness, and our best welfare, they are as the breath of spiritual life to the Christian. This assurance gives a feeling of reality, depth and tenderness to our devotions, which enables us to enter now, in some measure, into that communion with our God, which is to be the portion and reward of the accepted spirit in the heavenly world. Do we not speak to the experience of the reader in this? Is there no response to these words, in his own consciousness? If so, let him not, on this account, reject the doctrine we thus defend and assert. It is possible he is no competent judge in this matter. He may be very wary and very successful in all those selfish calculations and objects which regard this present world. He may deem himself so wise and clear-headed as to feel authorized to say that we are speaking the language of excited feeling and raised enthusiasm. But still this may be a subject, on which, with the idols he has set up in his bosom, and with his present state and habits of mind, he is not qualified to speak. His pursuits may have led him into trains of thought so diverse and even opposite, that he can have no sympathy with ours in this. There yet may be a boon and a blessedness here on the earth to be enjoyed, of which, with his merely earthly objects before him, he has not yet attained the slightest conception. And let him be reminded, yet further, there may be a wisdom of the soul whose price no earthly wealth can reach. Have any whose eyes rest on these lines, felt this communion of the heart with its God, they, *they* know that our words, and that all words, serve, rather as shadows than as lights, to indicate the blessed reality.

1st Series. No. 89.

THE

FOUNDATION

OF OUR

CONFIDENCE IN THE SAVIOUR.

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PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

NOVEMBER, 1834.

Price 4 Cents.

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS, BOSTON.

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It is one of the popular objections against Unitarianism, that by denying that Jesus is the Supreme God, it weakens the ground of our confidence in him; that it destroys the value and efficacy of his teachings and cross, and thus fails of meeting the wants of the sinner; that it furnishes no adequate Saviour, and opens no fountain of true and lasting comfort and peace. This objection, it is the purpose of my present remarks to meet. I shall attempt to show, that the foundation of our confidence in Jesus remains the same, whatever views are entertained of his nature and person. We build not on the *dignity of his nature,* but on the *commission he received from the Father* to teach and to save. We view him as 'sent into the world' by the Father, as having come in the Father's name, and clothed with his authority, and on this fact we rest — rest on the *divinity of his mission.*

This simple fact, — that Jesus was of, or from God, that is, was commissioned by him, acted under his direc-

tion and by his authority, we view as one of immense interest and importance, because it goes to show that Christians are in harmony on the most essential, we may say the only essential, point of faith. A belief of this one great and leading fact, entitles persons to the name of Christians, in the original and correct acceptation of the term, prepares them to listen to Jesus as one, who brought us the words of everlasting life, to go to him and to his religion for guidance, for support, and solace now, and to hope for the pardon and happiness to be hereafter dispensed in his name. Whatever different and conflicting sentiments men entertain concerning his person, as long as they admit this one fact, they stand on common ground. There is only one basis of their trust and hopes in Christ, and the speculations, in which they indulge on the subject of his original nature and essence, whatever conclusions they suggest, leave that basis untouched.

For proof of the correctness of our position, that the divinity, not of *Christ's nature*, but of his *mission*, furnishes the proper, and the only proper ground of trust in him, we must appeal to the sacred writings, and we do this with the firm belief, that the evidence they afford on the subject is full and overwhelming. In all the New Testament, is there a word employed, or a hint dropped, which would lead us to suppose, that he saves us by virtue of his own unborrowed greatness? What was the sentiment he seemed particularly anxious to impress on the minds of those whom the fame of his wisdom, or of his miracles, drew around him? What the style, in which he addressed them? What the belief it unavoidably inspires? That the value of his ministrations depended on the original mode of his existence, or the time at which it commenced?

No. Those ministrations owe all their worth and efficacy to that greater Being, who ordained and accepted them.

I. Take first, his instructions. The doctrines of Jesus have, in the view of all Christians, a value and certainty, to which mere human reasoning never aspires. We go to the simple narratives of the evangelists, we endeavor to gather up his precious words, we listen to catch every sound which falls from his lips, for we are confident, that he uttered truths which man's wisdom could never teach. Now whence does this confidence, this reverence for our Saviour's words, which, in the mind of the pious Christian, grows and strengthens with time, arise? It must originate in the persuasion, either that he partook of a divine nature, or that he was divinely illumined: either that he was God, or acted by his authority, was commissioned, taught and directed by him. And we see not why his instructions would not be entitled to as much respect, in the latter case, as in the former. Let us be convinced beyond all doubt, that a divine spirit rested on him, that he was admitted to a familiarity with the counsels of heaven, expressed in the scriptures by the phrase, being 'in the bosom of the Father,' that God was with him and dwelt in him, as he has dwelt in no other being, we are compelled to receive his teachings as the teachings of the Father. They bear as broad a stamp of divinity, as decided features of a heavenly origin, as we can demand, or the Deity bestow. We feel that nothing is wanting to inspire the utmost veneration for them. They have God for their author as truly and strictly, as if he were present and uttered them. Jesus was only the organ, through which he

conveyed them to our understanding and senses. As such, and as such alone, he asks to be heard. He attributes nothing to his own affluence and fulness, but with the meekness of true and profound piety, ascribes all to his Father's gift. '*My doctrine is not mine*,' he says, '*but his that sent me*.' (John vii. 16.) He that sent me is true, and *I speak to the world those things, which I have heard of him*.' (John. viii. 26) '*I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*. Whatsoever I speak, therefore *even as the Father hath said unto me I speak*.' (John xii. 49, 50.) 'All things *I have heard of my Father* I have made known unto you.' (John xv. 15.)

I might quote much more to the same effect. Now I would ask any sober and reflecting person, whether it is supposable, whether it is possible, that Jesus would have spoken thus, had he been desirous of inspiring a belief of his original dignity and omniscience, as the basis of our respect for his instructions. No. Such language could have been employed only with one view. It expresses one great and prominent sentiment, and expresses it fully and strongly. It teaches us, as plainly as words can, that he claimed to be heard as one inspired, taught, and sent of God, and in no other character. This is the only construction, which the laws of common sense and sound criticism allow us to put upon it. Every other construction is manifestly forced and erroneous. The distinction sometimes resorted to between an inferiority of nature, and an official inferiority, and the old fiction of two natures, will not explain it, except on principles, which would render the bible an incomprehensible book, and have the effect of introducing total uncertainty into

all human language. The fundamental rule of interpretation, which requires words to be understood in their obvious and unembarrassed sense, and according to established usage, unless the general strain of the discourse or argument in which they occur, the known views of the author, his usual mode of expressing himself, and the probability that he does not mean to utter an absurdity, suggest some modification as necessary, compels us to believe, that our Lord, by the above-mentioned and similar expressions, meant to direct the attention of his hearers to his divine mission, as the sole ground of their confidence in him. Had he intended to give their thoughts this direction, he could not have chosen words better fitted for his purpose. We have no choice left us but either to suppose, that such was his intention, or to sit down in utter despair of ever being able to comprehend his language.

The miracles of our Lord were intended to confirm the sentiment so anxiously inculcated in that class of passages to which I have referred. They were wrought not to prove the dignity of his *person*, but the origin of his *mission*. This is a very important distinction, and one which is fully authorized by the language of the New Testament. No instance, we feel safe in affirming, can be produced, in which our Lord himself, or his apostles, speak of the miraculous powers, with which he was invested, as implying an exalted nature; — no instance in which those powers were exerted with a view to inspire a reverence for the greatness of his underived attributes, or suggest the inference that he partook of a divine essence. On the contrary, he was careful to forewarn his followers against drawing any such inference from the

astonishing works, of which they were spectators. He tells them that *of himself* he can *do nothing*, (John v. 30.) that all his power was given him of his Father; and it was given, as he expressly asserts, as the seal of his heavenly mission. It proved, and was intended to prove, nothing as to his rank or essence. '*The works*, which the Father *hath given me to finish*,' he observes, '*the same works, that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.*' (John v. 36.) Such was their design; and so, I add, they were viewed by those who witnessed them. Thus Nicodemus says to him, 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a *teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles, which thou dost, except God be with him.*' (John iii. 2.) A similar sentiment was frequently expressed by others during the term of our Lord's ministry, and by his Apostles after his death. His miraculous gifts were regarded as establishing the fact, that he was divinely raised up, sent, and aided, and nothing more. It remained for subsequent ages, when men had departed from the simplicity which was in Christ, to turn them into an argument for his original and independent divinity.

The true basis, then, of our reverence for the words of our Saviour, if we may trust our bibles, is the commission he received from the Father to instruct the world. His doctrines derive their whole value and weight from the circumstance, that he was a Teacher sent from God, that God was with him, and in token of his presence, and of the all-important work he had committed to him, bestowed on him the power of working miracles. Such is the doctrine breathed from almost every page of the New Testament. It appears astonishing, that its truth should ever have been questioned; that after the most solemn

assurances of our Lord, that he was only the medium through which God conversed with man, that the gracious words which fell from his lips, were not his own, but proceeded from the Father, any other ground of our confidence in his revelations should have been suggested.

II. I now pass to my second general topic, the efficacy of Christ's sufferings. That his death was highly subservient to the object he came into the world to accomplish is doubted by none. It tended in itself, and especially as followed by his resurrection, to add weight to his instructions, to overcome indifference, to touch the sensibility, and send a healing and quickening influence to the heart. It has, in the opinion of all Christians, an important moral efficacy. It is one of the numerous means, which christianity employs for bringing the sinner to repentance, forming in him the character God approves, and thus procuring for him pardon and felicity. It operates on man, and, in this view, performs an office of momentous value and importance.

A further efficacy, it is well known, has been usually contended for, though different views are entertained of its nature. Some of these views may be easily shown to be encumbered with difficulties, or lead to consequences which compel us to reject them. Thus we cannot hesitate, for one moment, to pronounce the popular notion, that the sufferings of Christ operate on God, by making satisfaction to his justice, and thus disposing or enabling him to feel and extend compassion to his sinning and penitent offspring, as unscriptural, absurd and impious; for it goes to rob the Deity of his unalterable attributes of love and mercy, and convert him into an unfeeling and changeful tyrant, whose indulgence and fa-

vor must be purchased with the price of blood. The justice, which is spoken of, and which is supposed to be satisfied by the sufferings of Jesus, is not the justice of a father, nor justice in the best and noblest sense of the term, an exalted and godlike quality, which distinguishes between the penitent and impenitent, which chastens that it may reform sin, which makes use of gentle invitations of love, and soft whispers of hope, which resorts to severity only when milder methods have been exhausted, and employs no more of it than is needed to accomplish the ends of benevolence by bringing the wanderer back to God, to virtue and to happiness. No. It is narrow, vindictive justice; arbitrary will, justice viewed not so much the property of the best, as of the most despotic natures; not so much the quality of a moral agent, as a sort of abstract phantom, having feelings, views and interests of its own, jealous of its dignity, and suspicious of insult, rigorous, implacable, revengeful; demanding a full equivalent of suffering for every offence. Justice of the former kind, moral justice, which is the only justice we can without impiety ascribe to the Diety, includes compassion as part of itself. It does not exact of the reformed transgressor the punishment, which is due only to hardened and persevering iniquity. It shudders at the idea of inflicting on the penitent the same chastisement, which is inflicted on the careless and obdurate. It delights in mercy still more than in judgment. Its favorite work and object, in fact, are to inspire in the offender sorrow and regret for having offended; to encourage his repentance, and urge him to perfect it; to watch over and cherish within him all good affections; finally, to enrich his soul with genuine, exalted and heavenly vir-

tue as the source of all true peace and happiness. To withhold compassion from a penitent, and therefore deserving object, is wholly foreign from its nature, argues a spirit of severity, and partakes of a character of substantial injustice. We cannot ascribe such a spirit and character to God, without blotting out his venerable perfections, effacing his divinity, divesting him not merely of the affections of a Father, but of all the attributes of a moral being.

Mercy to the contrite and reformed, like approbation of goodness, is a moral affection, which a perfect being cannot lay down without changing his whole nature. It must be inspired by moral and personal qualities in its object; it can be inspired by no other; nor can it be transferred from one object to another of a different and opposite character, from one that is deserving to one that is worthless. No foreign consideration can produce or extinguish it. This and all other moral affections, we are persuaded, are strong and perfect in the Deity; he could not, therefore, love and approve the wicked any the more because a noble and accepted victim consented to be sacrificed for them, and thus render his merits precious in the sight of heaven. That he did not spare such a victim, but freely gave him for us, may with propriety be urged as a strong evidence and expression of his compassion towards his creatures, but it could in no sense generate that compassion, or cause any change in those moral affections of approbation and disapprobation, which he must feel toward his intelligent offspring exactly corresponding to character. — A deep sense of the turpitude of sin, remorse for having become stained with it, and persevering efforts to wipe off its pollutions, and ob-

tain the temper and habits, prescribed by reason, and inculcated by the precepts of Jesus Christ, are right and fit; they are such as become the sinner; such as entitle him to the regard and indulgence of all intelligent natures. Not to feel and show this regard and indulgence would suppose a want of those affections and principles, which should be found in all moral beings, and of which God especially, as standing at the head of all such beings in the universe, the fountain and example of all exalted justice, all beneficence and mercy, cannot surely be destitute.

The notion that Christ's sufferings were intended to satisfy divine justice, though not yet abandoned, is not, perhaps, as prevalent now, as it has been in some former times. A more modern theory is, that the sacrifice of an exalted victim, though not viewed in the light of a satisfaction, and not designed to operate on God, was necessary to display his hatred of iniquity, and maintain the respect due to his laws; that to pardon sin without it, would produce contempt for his justice, and thus defeat the ends of moral government. This mode of viewing the subject appears equally erroneous with that just noticed. It drops, to be sure, some of the more odious features of the old system; it partakes a little more of the vague and mystical; its absurdity is not quite as palpable, but it is equally repugnant to the reason and to the uniform sense of the sacred writings.

How God manifests his love of justice and abhorrence of sin by inflicting on a deserving object, the sufferings due only to the undeserving, or, for it resolves itself into this at last, by punishing the innocent to let the guilty escape, is more than we are able to comprehend. The

very reverse of this would seem to follow. The spectacle of a sinless being stretched on the cross to expiate the crimes of the wicked, or prepare the way for their forgiveness, far from inspiring a reverence for God's moral attributes, is, according to our view, fitted effectually to weaken or destroy it. It would furnish as strong an argument of his injustice and cruelty as could possibly be offered to our minds. The greatness of our Lord's sufferings, voluntarily met to redeem us from the dominion and punishment of sin, should certainly cause us to reflect on the bitter and tremendous consequences of persevering in it. So much would not have been undergone to avert from us any trifling evil. But when we are told, that those sufferings, instead of being viewed as a sacrifice made in the cause of virtue and humanity, are to be regarded as an exhibition designed to illustrate God's supreme regard for justice, and without which he would have been compelled, in order to secure the ends of his government, to punish sin to the utmost, though wept over and forsaken, we are amazed at the extraordinary suggestion; and are tempted to ask, what sort of justice is that, a fear of which must be inspired by the shedding of such precious blood? And what sort of government that which rests on such justice as its basis? Surely it is not a government, which would be permitted to stand on earth for an hour.

A large class of Christians, however, rejecting the before-mentioned views of the death of Christ, are still not satisfied with ascribing to it simply a moral efficacy. They think, that the scriptures represent it as a method, an instrument, or procuring cause of human forgiveness in a different, and higher sense, making it the means of

rendering repentance available to pardon. Whether this opinion be correct, or rests merely on some Jewish reasoning, and Rabbinical and figurative expressions, which require to be interpreted cautiously, and with considerable latitude, it does not fall within the design of my present remarks to examine. All which is now contended for is, that if the death of Jesus have any efficacy of this kind, it must owe it solely to God's special appointment. Nothing would induce us to believe, for a single moment, that the anguish, either bodily or mental, of any being however exalted, could, naturally and of itself, have any influence in removing the guilt or delivering us from the punishment of sin. It could not have the effect, and was not wanted, to excite God's compassion towards his creatures, or call forth expressions of it in their favor. Was the spectacle of a sinless being, exposed as a malefactor on the cross, of a nature to sooth or gratify him? Was it necessary, that having glutted his thirst of vengeance by the sight, he might turn away appeased and softened? No. He takes no pleasure in cruelty; he delights not in blood. If the sacrifice of an innocent sufferer, therefore, was the price or instrument of our forgiveness, or in any way conduced to it, except so far as it was adapted to excite and nourish our virtue, and thus render us fit subjects of pardon, it must have become such only because God, for reasons not explained to us, expressly ordained it; and then the nature and rank of the sufferer cease to be of any importance. Nothing depends on them, but all rests on the divine will and appointment. The only question, which we are concerned to settle, then is, has God ordained the sacrifice? If so, it must be an adequate one. We have no

right to doubt the sufficiency of the victim chosen and accepted of him, or to say that he could not have selected a being of a different order, whose death, had he so pleased, would have had the same efficacy. Had he fixed on any other being in the universe, of however inferior a nature, as the medium of conveying the benefits of his mercy to the world, that being would have been rendered competent by the very act of God choosing and ordaining him; and thus the argument for the original dignity of our Lord's nature, from the supposed necessity of an exalted victim, falls to the ground.

It is asserted, I know, that there is something peculiarly soothing in the belief, that a being of an infinite nature stands between God and us to urge his merits in our behalf. Such a belief, we are told, is fitted more than any other to cheer and sustain the soul weighed down by a sense of imperfection and unworthiness. If so, it is because we are accustomed to false and degrading conceptions of the Divine Being. Right views of him are suited not more to fill us with reverence, than with exalted love and unshaken trust. We regard it as one of the heaviest charges against that mass of gloomy and corrupt doctrines, which have for ages overshadowed Christianity, that they lead men to transfer to another those affections, which are primarily due only to the Supreme Divinity. They tend to exalt the Saviour above God in our love and esteem. It is not surprising, that a mind fully persuaded of the truth of the popular doctrines concerning God and Jesus, and thoroughly imbued with their spirit, should turn away with shuddering from the sterner attributes of the Father to repose in the milder nature of the Son. The latter is represented

as possessing a character far more attractive of the two. The Father is clothed with awe inspiring power, and holds the balance of inflexible and severe justice; the Son is surrounded with the more winning glories of placability and love. The Father, with the cruelty of a remorseless tyrant, dooms the whole human race to remediless and everlasting wo, to expiate the offence of their original ancestor; the Son, moved by infinite compassion, steps forward to turn aside his almighty wrath by his own death, and, as the price of his blood, is permitted to take a select number of ransomed souls with him to the abodes of heavenly felicity, the rest comprising a large part of mankind, being left to drag out a never-ending existence in sorrows unutterable. It would be strange if doctrines, fitted to leave such impressions on the mind, should nourish that spirit of deep and confiding piety, which looks to the Universal Father as the only refuge of the guilt-burthened and sorrow-stricken soul. But these doctrines Unitarianism rejects as absurd and monstrous fictions. We consider it one mark of its truth and great practical value, that it inculcates those views of God, which tend to render a belief of his all surrounding power and presence, not a chilling and melancholy persuasion, we would, if possible, forever banish from our minds, but a fond and cherished sentiment; one to which the mind naturally turns in sorrow, in weakness, in temptation, and the agony of disease and death; a sentiment, the destruction of which would darken the whole soul, and throw a more than funereal sadness over the universe.

Further, we shall be told, that admitting the efficacy of Christ's sufferings is to be attributed to the will and

acceptance of the Deity, still, the object for which he was suspended on the cross implies his divinity ; that God in selecting an agent to accomplish this object was compelled, by the nature of the case, to fix on one partaking of the attribute of infinity. A finite being, it is said, could not make adequate propitiation for sin, because sin, viewed as committed against an infinite object, has infinite guilt, and therefore requires an infinite atonement, and such atonement could be made only by a being himself infinite.

It can scarcely be necessary to point out the fallacious reasoning, the flimsy, bare-faced sophistry contained in this and similar language, often used for the sake of popular effect.

In the first place, it is a gross abuse of terms to assert, that sin, because committed against an infinite Being, has in any sense, features of infinity. The nature of the object, against whom the offence is committed, aggravates it, only as it implies insensibility, presumption, or perverseness in the offender. To trespass against a Being, who deserves to be loved with all the understanding, soul, and strength, is an offence of an exceedingly dark hue. Still, it is human, it is finite ; it is an act of a finite being, and as such can never partake of the character of infinity.

Besides, if sin is infinite, because committed against an infinite Being, then all and every sin is so, and therefore equal, for infinity admits of no degrees. The consequence is, that he that trespasses once is equally guilty in the sight of God, equally an object of his abhorrence with one, who trespasses with every breath. Nothing can add to the blackness of infinite guilt, nothing increase the load of it ; and thus we hear it sometimes asserted, that

'one sin is sufficient to sink the sinner to the lowest depths of hell.'

A theory encumbered with such difficulties, we need not say, cannot be true. It is opposed to reason, to the common sentiments and common feelings of human nature. It confounds the distinctions of right and wrong, embarrasses our moral faculties, and destroys all confidence in their decisions. We have a new standard of merit and demerit, of virtue and vice, and before our language can become conformed to that standard, our mode of thinking and expressing ourselves on the moral qualities of temper and actions, the whole vocabulary of common life, in fact, as well as of ethics and religion, must undergo a revolution. — But I have bestowed more attention on the argument for the infinite nature of sin than it deserves. The bare statement of it is sufficient to refute it, for it bears the character of extravagance and absurdity on every feature.

I have intimated that the language alluded to, contains in it, in my judgment, barefaced sophistry. In truth, sophistry never appeared under a thinner veil, and I know not whether we ought to be more surprised at its grossness, or at the confidence, bold, unblushing confidence with which it is urged. Christ must have been an infinite being, we are informed, because no other could have made adequate atonement for sin. But would those, who reason thus, be really understood to say that an infinite being breathed out his soul in agony on the cross; that the God of nature was really betrayed, arrested, condemned, and executed as a malefactor, by finite and frail children of dust; that the omnipotent and omnipresent Creator and Preserv-

er of the universe was confined three days in a shroud and tomb furnished by the compassion of his creatures? Expressions implying something equivalent to this, it is true, occur both in older and more modern writings. But we are charitable enough to suppose, that they originate in mere carelessness, or a fondness for gross and overcharged pictures and representations; that were those, who use them, asked whether they meant to assert that God was really fastened to the cross, died, was buried, and the third day rose again, they would disclaim any such intention. The Deity is incapable of suffering. On the supposition, therefore, that Christ possessed a divine, as well as human, nature, he suffered only in the latter, only as man. No infinite nature suffered, or could suffer. Why then talk of an infinite atonement? No such atonement, in the sense in which it is understood by its advocates, was ever made, or could be made. The hypothesis of Christ's divinity does not provide for it, because it furnishes only a finite and human sufferer, and with respect to the satisfaction or atonement, therefore, is reduced to a level with the hypothesis of his simple humanity.

Let us not, then, be told that the object for which Christ died, implies his Divinity. No assertion can be more destitute of foundation, or more outrage reason and common sense. — But I forbear. Enough has been said to show, that the worth and efficacy of our Saviour's instructions and death depend on a consideration entirely foreign from the dignity of his nature.

III. So, too, I observe of the agency he now exercises, of whatever nature it be, it owes its whole interest and importance to the Divine will and appointment. His

inherent divinity is not made the basis of any of those benefits he confers on us, or of any act he performs, in his present state of exaltation, any more than of the benefits derived from his ministry and sufferings on earth. All the glories of that state, all the honors, privileges, and offices it implies, are expressly referred to the Father, 'who *made* him both Lord and Christ' (Acts ii. 36.) — 'who *exalted* him and *gave* him a name' (Phil. ii. 9.) — '*raised* him from the dead and *gave* him glory' (1 Pet. i. 21.) 'Appointed him heir of all things,' (Heb. i. 2.) —'*committed* all judgment to him,' having 'appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, *by that man whom he hath chosen*, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that *he hath raised him from the dead.*' (John v. 22; Acts xvii. 31.)

Nor are we authorized to say that any of these honors, or any part of this agency, suppose him originally to have partaken of a divine nature. The expressions, in which he is spoken of as having received power to judge the world, admitting that they are to be taken literally, and not as they may be understood, figuratively, as signifying only that we shall be judged according to the laws and spirit of his gospel, are far from implying any attributes strictly infinite. The scriptures certainly never allude to such attributes as necessary to the exercise of this power. They never in the remotest way insinuate, that it was bestowed on him because he possessed an exalted nature. Just the reverse. God 'gave him authority to execute judgment, *because he was the son of man*,' (John v. 27.) partook of our nature, and was, therefore, capable of being 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'

Our confidence in the Saviour, then, in what he did and suffered on earth, in what he now performs in heaven, in his past and future ministrations and offices, is inspired solely by a belief of his divine mission. All his sufficiency is of God, who sent him to be the Saviour of the world, and who, we are certain, would not leave him incompetent to the work committed to him. With the magnitude of that work we trust that we are as deeply impressed as are any of our fellow Christians, however they may differ from us in their views of the original attributes of Jesus. But had not God power to commit it to whom he would? Was he restricted in his choice of means? Who shall lay restraints on omnipotence? Who shall say that the universal Father, as the cause and fountain of all capacities and might, cannot clothe the humblest of his offspring with power adequate to accomplish the noblest purpose of his beneficence? Can any instrument be feeble in his hands? Can he not strengthen the weak, and perfect the frail? In providing for our rescue from sin, from suffering, and despair, was he compelled to act only through a particular medium? had he no choice of agents — no ability to raise up and endow whom he would? was he compelled to employ one, who partook of his nature and shared his throne? — Convinced that Jesus was commissioned and sent by him to be the dispenser of his best gifts to man, we think that we have sufficient reason for confiding in him. In doing this, we confide not in mere human, not in angelic and derived power and excellence; we rest on the truth, the wisdom, and beneficence of that great Being who formed, sustains, and fills all things.

The objection so strenuously urged against Unitarianism, that it does not fully meet the wants of the sinner,

does not provide for his pardon and security, thus disappears the moment we examine dispassionately the basis on which, according to the uniform language of the New Testament, our confidence in Jesus is placed. It originates altogether in a misapprehension concerning the ground on which he claims to be heard and trusted. If, divesting our understandings of the influence of popular and received opinions, we sit down calmly, and endeavor to ascertain the ultimate fact or doctrine on which the fabric of our hopes as Christians rests as its main pillar, we shall find that Unitarianism embraces this fact or doctrine, that it builds exclusively upon it, that it never ceases to urge it as the foundation of all our expectations of benefit from the Saviour. It thus has the advantage over all other systems, we think, in its truth, its beautiful simplicity, and its fitness to produce a deep and abiding effect on the heart. Instead of embarrassing our minds and taxing our credulity, by asking us to believe doctrines of which their mysterious, abstruse, and incomprehensible nature is their least obnoxious feature, it points to one great and primary fact or sentiment, which is level to every capacity, and the admission of which is enough to supply the strongest motives and excitements to virtue, enough for safety, for consolation, and for final happiness. — Far from having any tendency to fill the mind of the sinner with despair, it holds the only language which, as it seems to us, is capable of affording him any rational hope and trust. Did it direct his attention to the bought favor of a tyrant, — bought by the incarnation and sufferings of a God, — as the foundation of his safety, he might tell us that it taught a doctrine adapted only to inspire melancholy, distrust and terror. It is

true, he might say to us, you talk to me of a substitute, an exalted and innocent personage, on whom he has spent the swift arrows of his wrath ; and you inform me that he is now appeased, that his justice is satisfied, that he is willing and authorized to forgive. But, meanwhile, what a conception you have taught me to form of God ! What a monster you have held up as an object of my reverence and trust ! Surely, you do not ask me to repose confidence in such a Being. I can view him only with shuddering and horror. The belief that he formed and governs the universe would fill me with gloom, which nothing could effectually alleviate. It would be a truly appalling sentiment, an abhorred persuasion, from which I would willingly take refuge in the less chilling creed of the atheist.

But Unitarianism furnishes other ground of confidence and hope. It sooths and sustains the contrite and burdened spirit by carrying the thoughts up to the one infinite Father, who embraces the whole of his offspring in the arms of his benevolence, and whose unbought compassion raised up and sent Jesus with power to heal and to save. It presents to our anxious minds, a Being in whom our highest and best affections are capable of being concentrated, whom we can venerate, and love, and trust, not on account of what another has done or suffered to render him propitious, but on account of his own everlasting and unchangeable attributes. That such a doctrine should be charged with a tendency to weaken the foundation of the sinner's trust, and add despair to remorse, is really matter of no small surprise and astonishment. To us, we repeat, it appears to address him in the only language which is fitted to yield him

comfort and support. Instead of placing his expectations of pardon on a foundation, which may totter and sink under him, it places them on the only foundation which can never be shaken. The arm on which he leans, is omnipotent, and the rock of his trust the throne of the Eternal.

We are accused of not feeling sufficient veneration for the Saviour, of undervaluing what he has performed for us, of stripping his religion of all its noble and distinguishing attributes, of dimming its glories, and frittering it down to a system of dry, frigid, and lifeless morality. Such charges, we are willing to believe, originate in ignorance and misconception concerning the form in which christianity is received by us. Unitarianism has been misunderstood, or but imperfectly comprehended, by the great mass of those, who have been loudest in abusing and denouncing it. The term has suggested to the minds of its opponents only the vague idea of some monstrous and heart-chilling delusion, something hardly yielding, in impiety, to the imposture of Mahommed, a cunning forgery of Satan, fitted to inflate pride, and favor the indolent and corrupt propensities of the heart, by encouraging trust in human merit, administering opiates, using smooth and honeyed speech, and thus luring its dreamy and self-applauding votaries onward in the broad and downward road of destruction. That persons having these impressions on the subject of Unitarianism should think and speak of it with horror, need not surprise us. It is not, however, Unitarianism which they dread and war against in their minds, but a hideous phantom, a deformed spectre, which has no existence out of their own imaginations. Were Unitarianism understood by them,

we do not say that it would be in all cases approved. This is not to be expected, for it is opposed to some sentiments, which were probably among the first with which their minds were imbued, which struck deep root therefore, and which have been nourished and strengthened by a thousand influences. But we believe that it would be found, in a majority of instances, to coincide with their own views and feelings — those views and feelings, which are intrenched in the deepest recesses of their understanding and hearts — to an extent which would greatly astonish them. We believe that it would find an echo in many breasts, which now shudder at the very name of it; and that those who should continue to reject it as not conformable to truth, would, with few exceptions, view it with diminished horror and alarm. They would find it not that monstrous compound of impiety, folly, and pride, which they have been led to imagine it. They would not, we trust, discover us to be wanting in due veneration for the Saviour, and a due sense of the worth of his religion. — Is it nothing that we venerate him as a being divinely commissioned, and sent to be unto us a Prince and a Saviour, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Divinity—through whom God manifested himself, as he had never before manifested himself, to the world — who was the bright effulgence of the Father's glory, and express image, representative, copy or resemblance of his character and person — from whose words, life, and actions, breathed a spirit of divine wisdom and excellence — who was authorized to make known the conditions of human forgiveness — whose doctrines, example, and cross have a quickening and restoring efficacy—who, by the power and truth of God dwelling and operating in

and through him, was rendered able to save to the uttermost? Is it nothing that we venerate him as we venerate no earthly master — no mere human saviour, guide, example, and reformer — that we regard him as sustaining a character and relations, which entitle him to the homage of all understandings, and love of all hearts — that though unseen, we believe, we confide, we rejoice in him as the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Pattern of our charity, and Teacher of 'hopes that overstep the grave?'

Nor do we rob his religion of any of those attributes, which tend to give it power over the mind, and render it a most important instrument of human reform and virtue. We do not subtract from its value and efficacy, as an agent mighty to the pulling down of every strong hold of sin within the breast, able to work powerfully in our hearts, and build us up in faith, in love, and true holiness. We only relieve it, we think, of a load of corrupt doctrines, which have darkened its visage, choked its influence, and arrayed against it some of the most inveterate prejudices of human nature. We take away what is extraneous, that its original and majestic features, its noble simplicity, its life giving energy may be more apparent. We view it not as a mere code of ethics, not as a system of cold, speculative, and earthly morality. We esteem it especially as a revelation of divine truth, as announcing the doctrine of pardon and life, as a voice of counsel, of admonition, of encouragement, and hope, issuing from the throne of God's mercy, and uttering his gracious will and purposes. We value it as the source of all that is most precious in our joys, and soothing in our sorrows — as our weapon of defence in the time of tempta-

tion, the assistant of our weakness, the strengthener of our virtue, the inspirer of noble thoughts and magnanimous deeds — our guide, sanctifier, and friend — the instrument by which we are enabled to overcome the world and the flesh — the great and prime agent in renovating, in refining, and exalting our spirits, and fitting us for a final union with Jesus, and with God, the Father of Jesus.

NOTES.

I. I AM happy to subjoin, in corroboration of the general train of reasoning pursued in the present Tract, the following extracts from a Trinitarian writer so deserving of respect as Bishop Watson.

'What need is there that we should calumniate and detest one another, because we cannot agree in our notions concerning the person of Christ? He is the *seed of the woman*, whose office it was to bruise the serpent's head; the *seed of Abraham* in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; the *last Adam*, in whom all were to be made alive; *the Son, whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world; the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world;* the Advocate who now liveth to make intercession for us; the Judge, who will at the last day reward every man according to his works; these and many other truths may be predicated concerning Jesus Christ, both by those who admit and by those who deny his pre-existence. His authority as a Teacher is the same, whether you suppose him to have been the Eternal God, or a Being inferior to him, but commissioned by him, for the Gospel of Christ, whatever you may determine concerning the person of Christ, is certainly sealed with the finger of God. We are-under the same obligation to obey the precepts of the gospel, are incited to obedience by the same hopes, deterred from disobedience by the same fears, whether we believe Jesus of Nazareth to have been co-eternal with the first source of all Being, or to have been a man miraculously conceived, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.' — *Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocess of Landaff* in 1784.

'If God thought fit to accept for our redemption any price, there is nothing, that we know of, but his own wisdom, which could determine what price he would accept Hence I see no difficulty in admitting, that the death of an angel, or of a mere man might have been the price which God fixed upon. The *Socinians* contend, that Christ was a man, who had no existence before he was born of Mary; but they seem to me not to draw a just consequence, when from thence they infer, that an atonement could not have been made for the sins of mankind by the death of Jesus. The *Arians* maintain, that Jesus had an existence before he was born of Mary; and there is no reason for thinking, that the death of such a being might not have made an atonement for the sins of mankind. All depends upon the appointment of God; and if instead of the death of a super-angelic, of an angelic, or of a human being, God had fixed on any other instrument as a medium of restoring man to immortality, it would have been highly improper in us to have quarrelled with the mean, which his goodness had appointed, merely because we could not see how it was fitted to attain the end.' — *Charge delivered* 1795.

II. I observed, (page 23,) that expressions implying that an infinite nature suffered, frequently occur in Trinitarian writers. Indeed the general strain of the language and reasoning employed by Trinitarians on the subject of the death of Christ is adapted to leave such an impression on the mind. If this impression is not designed, the expressions and reasoning alluded to, must be regarded as peculiarly unfortunate, and it is time they were discarded. But they are necessary, perhaps, to uphold the popular notion of the atonement, and gratify a love of the obscure, the marvellous, and strange. I might fill pages with specimens from writers above the ordinary level of modern scribblers for religious Magazines and Newspapers. Dr. Barrow, whose claim to rank in the class of old English Divines with Hooker and Taylor is fully settled, speaks of the 'immensity of worth and efficacy, which must needs accrue to the death of our Saviour — from his being God.' 'That the immortal God should die,' he adds with singular infelicity, 'as it cannot be heard without wonder, so it could not be undertaken without huge reason, nor accomplished without mighty effect.' Works, vol. ii. p. 290, Ed. Lon. 1716. Thus absurdly can men of the profoundest understandings, think and reason when fettered by the influence of theological systems.

1st Series. No. 90.

APOLOGIES

FOR

INDIFFERENCE

TO

RELIGION AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

EXAMINED.

BY SAMUEL BARRETT,

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

DECEMBER, 1834.

Price 4 *Cents.*

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL STREET.

APOLOGIES, &c.

It is my purpose in the following pages to offer a few remarks, such as it appears to me the times call for, on some of the apologies which certain persons occasionally make for not cherishing and manifesting a due interest in religion and its institutions. My readers will indulge me, I trust, in that plainness of speech and that directness of address, which, in the discussion of such topics, are both natural and useful.

What is religion? It is the convictions, sentiments, and actions, which befit man's relation to God and the spiritual world. What are the institutions of religion? They are the outward means, sanctioned directly or indirectly by divine wisdom and goodness, whereby those convictions are produced and strengthened, those sentiments are awakened and nourished, and those actions are prompted and perfected. What is it to cherish and manifest a due interest in religion and its institutions? The elements of a sufficient answer may be found within the sphere of men's secular pursuits. Look into the

house of merchandise, the mechanic's shop, the manufactory, the harvest field. What do you witness? Do you see minds faithless, so that they will not devise plans? Do you see hearts cold, so that they will not prompt to action? Do you see hands idle, so that they will not keep the wheels of business moving? Very little of this do you witness, and less of it do you hear any body approve. Men are not apt to be skeptical, indifferent, or sluggish, when worldly good is their object. This they know well enough how to prize, and any institution for securing this, they are ready enough to foster. When wealth, with its attendant advantages, is in prospect, what expense of thought will they not incur; what amount of feeling will they not bestow; what wear and tear of bone and muscle and fibre will they not endure, rather than fail of success. Then everything pertaining to the man, within and without, is activity, energy, zeal. Such it is to cherish and manifest a strong interest in secular pursuits. And like unto this is the interest men ought to cherish and manifest in regard to religion and its institutions.

Now, why is it otherwise with many? What are the reasons they allege for indifference to the whole subject of religion? What are the apologies they offer for excluding God, and a future life, and Christ, and all the realities of the spiritual world, from the number of those objects which they allow most strongly to engage their thoughts and feelings. What are the grounds on which they attempt to justify themselves in refusing to do anything for the support of religion and its institutions? I shall not undertake to state them all. I may not name even the most common ones. But I invite your attention to some of the excuses I have heard given,

and which, as they pass current with a class of persons in almost every community, deserve to have their unreasonableness shown. To begin then :

'There is nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth obliging us to support religion and its institutions ; and so we do not mean to have much to do either with the one or the other.' This is the sort of apology which some persons are beginning to make. But with what shadow of a good reason ? How shall I address these people ? Nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth *obliging* you! And has it come to this, that men, living in the nineteenth century, — in a civilized land, — in a christian community ,— descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, — can hold up their heads, under the light of day, amidst their fellow-citizens, and confess, without a burning blush, that they mean to do nothing more than they are *obliged* to do ? Nothing in the *laws of the Commonwealth !* What of that ? Are there no other laws binding on you? Not to speak of the laws of God in Holy Scripture, — what say you to the *natural* laws of self-protection, justice, benevolence ? Why, I should as soon expect a man would say, he did not mean to provide for his family, did not mean to help his neighbor raise the frame of a house or barn, did not mean to go to a town-meeting, because there is nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth obliging him to it.

What are the laws of the Commonwealth, that you should resolve to do no more than they enjoin ? Beyond and above all human enactments, stand the laws written by God on the heart, which no man can transgress with impunity. One of these is, that we be good and do good to the extent of our ability. Will any body

conveyed them to our understanding and senses. As such, and as such alone, he asks to be heard. He attributes nothing to his own affluence and fulness, but with the meekness of true and profound piety, ascribes all to his Father's gift. '*My doctrine is not mine*,' he says, '*but his that sent me*.' (John vii. 16.) He that sent me is true, and *I speak to the world those things, which I have heard of him*.' (John. viii. 26) '*I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*. Whatsoever I speak, therefore *even as the Father hath said unto me I speak*.' (John xii. 49, 50.) 'All things *I have heard of my Father* I have made known unto you.' (John xv. 15.)

I might quote much more to the same effect. Now I would ask any sober and reflecting person, whether it is supposable, whether it is possible, that Jesus would have spoken thus, had he been desirous of inspiring a belief of his original dignity and omniscience, as the basis of our respect for his instructions. No. Such language could have been employed only with one view. It expresses one great and prominent sentiment, and expresses it fully and strongly. It teaches us, as plainly as words can, that he claimed to be heard as one inspired, taught, and sent of God, and in no other character. This is the only construction, which the laws of common sense and sound criticism allow us to put upon it. Every other construction is manifestly forced and erroneous. The distinction sometimes resorted to between an inferiority of nature, and an official inferiority, and the old fiction of two natures, will not explain it, except on principles, which would render the bible an incomprehensible book, and have the effect of introducing total uncertainty into

all human language. The fundamental rule of interpretation, which requires words to be understood in their obvious and unembarrassed sense, and according to established usage, unless the general strain of the discourse or argument in which they occur, the known views of the author, his usual mode of expressing himself, and the probability that he does not mean to utter an absurdity, suggest some modification as necessary, compels us to believe, that our Lord, by the above-mentioned and similar expressions, meant to direct the attention of his hearers to his divine mission, as the sole ground of their confidence in him. Had he intended to give their thoughts this direction, he could not have chosen words better fitted for his purpose. We have no choice left us but either to suppose, that such was his intention, or to sit down in utter despair of ever being able to comprehend his language.

The miracles of our Lord were intended to confirm the sentiment so anxiously inculcated in that class of passages to which I have referred. They were wrought not to prove the dignity of his *person*, but the origin of his *mission*. This is a very important distinction, and one which is fully authorized by the language of the New Testament. No instance, we feel safe in affirming, can be produced, in which our Lord himself, or his apostles, speak of the miraculous powers, with which he was invested, as implying an exalted nature ; — no instance in which those powers were exerted with a view to inspire a reverence for the greatness of his underived attributes, or suggest the inference that he partook of a divine essence. On the contrary, he was careful to forewarn his followers against drawing any such inference from the

astonishing works, of which they were spectators. He tells them that *of himself* he can *do nothing*, (John v. 30.) that all his power was given him of his Father; and it was given, as he expressly asserts, as the seal of his heavenly mission. It proved, and was intended to prove, nothing as to his rank or essence. '*The works*, which the Father *hath given me to finish*,' he observes, '*the same works, that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.*' (John v. 36.) Such was their design; and so, I add, they were viewed by those who witnessed them. Thus Nicodemus says to him, 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a *teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles, which thou dost, except God be with him.*' (John iii. 2.) A similar sentiment was frequently expressed by others during the term of our Lord's ministry, and by his Apostles after his death. His miraculous gifts were regarded as establishing the fact, that he was divinely raised up, sent, and aided, and nothing more. It remained for subsequent ages, when men had departed from the simplicity which was in Christ, to turn them into an argument for his original and independent divinity.

The true basis, then, of our reverence for the words of our Saviour, if we may trust our bibles, is the commission he received from the Father to instruct the world. His doctrines derive their whole value and weight from the circumstance, that he was a Teacher sent from God, that God was with him, and in token of his presence, and of the all-important work he had committed to him, bestowed on him the power of working miracles. Such is the doctrine breathed from almost every page of the New Testament. It appears astonishing, that its truth should ever have been questioned; that after the most solemn

assurances of our Lord, that he was only the medium through which God conversed with man, that the gracious words which fell from his lips, were not his own, but proceeded from the Father, any other ground of our confidence in his revelations should have been suggested.

II. I now pass to my second general topic, the efficacy of Christ's sufferings. That his death was highly subservient to the object he came into the world to accomplish is doubted by none. It tended in itself, and especially as followed by his resurrection, to add weight to his instructions, to overcome indifference, to touch the sensibility, and send a healing and quickening influence to the heart. It has, in the opinion of all Christians, an important moral efficacy. It is one of the numerous means, which christianity employs for bringing the sinner to repentance, forming in him the character God approves, and thus procuring for him pardon and felicity. It operates on man, and, in this view, performs an office of momentous value and importance.

A further efficacy, it is well known, has been usually contended for, though different views are entertained of its nature. Some of these views may be easily shown to be encumbered with difficulties, or lead to consequences which compel us to reject them. Thus we cannot hesitate, for one moment, to pronounce the popular notion, that the sufferings of Christ operate on God, by making satisfaction to his justice, and thus disposing or enabling him to feel and extend compassion to his sinning and penitent offspring, as unscriptural, absurd and impious; for it goes to rob the Deity of his unalterable attributes of love and mercy, and convert him into an unfeeling and changeful tyrant, whose indulgence and fa-

vor must be purchased with the price of blood. The justice, which is spoken of, and which is supposed to be satisfied by the sufferings of Jesus, is not the justice of a father, nor justice in the best and noblest sense of the term, an exalted and godlike quality, which distinguishes between the penitent and impenitent, which chastens that it may reform sin, which makes use of gentle invitations of love, and soft whispers of hope, which resorts to severity only when milder methods have been exhausted, and employs no more of it than is needed to accomplish the ends of benevolence by bringing the wanderer back to God, to virtue and to happiness. No. It is narrow, vindictive justice; arbitrary will, justice viewed not so much the property of the best, as of the most despotic natures; not so much the quality of a moral agent, as a sort of abstract phantom, having feelings, views and interests of its own, jealous of its dignity, and suspicious of insult, rigorous, implacable, revengeful; demanding a full equivalent of suffering for every offence. Justice of the former kind, moral justice, which is the only justice we can without impiety ascribe to the Diety, includes compassion as part of itself. It does not exact of the reformed transgressor the punishment, which is due only to hardened and persevering iniquity. It shudders at the idea of inflicting on the penitent the same chastisement, which is inflicted on the careless and obdurate. It delights in mercy still more than in judgment. Its favorite work and object, in fact, are to inspire in the offender sorrow and regret for having offended; to encourage his repentance, and urge him to perfect it; to watch over and cherish within him all good affections; finally, to enrich his soul with genuine, exalted and heavenly vir-

tue as the source of all true peace and happiness. To withhold compassion from a penitent, and therefore deserving object, is wholly foreign from its nature, argues a spirit of severity, and partakes of a character of substantial injustice. We cannot ascribe such a spirit and character to God, without blotting out his venerable perfections, effacing his divinity, divesting him not merely of the affections of a Father, but of all the attributes of a moral being.

Mercy to the contrite and reformed, like approbation of goodness, is a moral affection, which a perfect being cannot lay down without changing his whole nature. It must be inspired by moral and personal qualities in its object; it can be inspired by no other; nor can it be transferred from one object to another of a different and opposite character, from one that is deserving to one that is worthless. No foreign consideration can produce or extinguish it. This and all other moral affections, we are persuaded, are strong and perfect in the Deity; he could not, therefore, love and approve the wicked any the more because a noble and accepted victim consented to be sacrificed for them, and thus render his merits precious in the sight of heaven. That he did not spare such a victim, but freely gave him for us, may with propriety be urged as a strong evidence and expression of his compassion towards his creatures, but it could in no sense generate that compassion, or cause any change in those moral affections of approbation and disapprobation, which he must feel toward his intelligent offspring exactly corresponding to character. — A deep sense of the turpitude of sin, remorse for having become stained with it, and persevering efforts to wipe off its pollutions, and ob-

tain the temper and habits, prescribed by reason, and inculcated by the precepts of Jesus Christ, are right and fit; they are such as become the sinner; such as entitle him to the regard and indulgence of all intelligent natures. Not to feel and show this regard and indulgence would suppose a want of those affections and principles, which should be found in all moral beings, and of which God especially, as standing at the head of all such beings in the universe, the fountain and example of all exalted justice, all beneficence and mercy, cannot surely be destitute.

The notion that Christ's sufferings were intended to satisfy divine justice, though not yet abandoned, is not, perhaps, as prevalent now, as it has been in some former times. A more modern theory is, that the sacrifice of an exalted victim, though not viewed in the light of a satisfaction, and not designed to operate on God, was necessary to display his hatred of iniquity, and maintain the respect due to his laws; that to pardon sin without it, would produce contempt for his justice, and thus defeat the ends of moral government. This mode of viewing the subject appears equally erroneous with that just noticed. It drops, to be sure, some of the more odious features of the old system; it partakes a little more of the vague and mystical; its absurdity is not quite as palpable, but it is equally repugnant to the reason and to the uniform sense of the sacred writings.

How God manifests his love of justice and abhorrence of sin by inflicting on a deserving object, the sufferings due only to the undeserving, or, for it resolves itself into this at last, by punishing the innocent to let the guilty escape, is more than we are able to comprehend. The

very reverse of this would seem to follow. The spectacle of a sinless being stretched on the cross to expiate the crimes of the wicked, or prepare the way for their forgiveness, far from inspiring a reverence for God's moral attributes, is, according to our view, fitted effectually to weaken or destroy it. It would furnish as strong an argument of his injustice and cruelty as could possibly be offered to our minds. The greatness of our Lord's sufferings, voluntarily met to redeem us from the dominion and punishment of sin, should certainly cause us to reflect on the bitter and tremendous consequences of persevering in it. So much would not have been undergone to avert from us any trifling evil. But when we are told, that those sufferings, instead of being viewed as a sacrifice made in the cause of virtue and humanity, are to be regarded as an exhibition designed to illustrate God's supreme regard for justice, and without which he would have been compelled, in order to secure the ends of his government, to punish sin to the utmost, though wept over and forsaken, we are amazed at the extraordinary suggestion; and are tempted to ask, what sort of justice is that, a fear of which must be inspired by the shedding of such precious blood? And what sort of government that which rests on such justice as its basis? Surely it is not a government, which would be permitted to stand on earth for an hour.

A large class of Christians, however, rejecting the before-mentioned views of the death of Christ, are still not satisfied with ascribing to it simply a moral efficacy. They think, that the scriptures represent it as a method, an instrument, or procuring cause of human forgiveness in a different, and higher sense, making it the means of

rendering repentance available to pardon. Whether this opinion be correct, or rests merely on some Jewish reasoning, and Rabbinical and figurative expressions, which require to be interpreted cautiously, and with considerable latitude, it does not fall within the design of my present remarks to examine. All which is now contended for is, that if the death of Jesus have any efficacy of this kind, it must owe it solely to God's special appointment. Nothing would induce us to believe, for a single moment, that the anguish, either bodily or mental, of any being however exalted, could, naturally and of itself, have any influence in removing the guilt or delivering us from the punishment of sin. It could not have the effect, and was not wanted, to excite God's compassion towards his creatures, or call forth expressions of it in their favor. Was the spectacle of a sinless being, exposed as a malefactor on the cross, of a nature to sooth or gratify him? Was it necessary, that having glutted his thirst of vengeance by the sight, he might turn away appeased and softened? No. He takes no pleasure in cruelty; he delights not in blood. If the sacrifice of an innocent sufferer, therefore, was the price or instrument of our forgiveness, or in any way conduced to it, except so far as it was adapted to excite and nourish our virtue, and thus render us fit subjects of pardon, it must have become such only because God, for reasons not explained to us, expressly ordained it; and then the nature and rank of the sufferer cease to be of any importance. Nothing depends on them, but all rests on the divine will and appointment. The only question, which we are concerned to settle, then is, has God ordained the sacrifice? If so, it must be an adequate one. We have no

right to doubt the sufficiency of the victim chosen and accepted of him, or to say that he could not have selected a being of a different order, whose death, had he so pleased, would have had the same efficacy. Had he fixed on any other being in the universe, of however inferior a nature, as the medium of conveying the benefits of his mercy to the world, that being would have been rendered competent by the very act of God choosing and ordaining him; and thus the argument for the original dignity of our Lord's nature, from the supposed necessity of an exalted victim, falls to the ground.

It is asserted, I know, that there is something peculiarly soothing in the belief, that a being of an infinite nature stands between God and us to urge his merits in our behalf. Such a belief, we are told, is fitted more than any other to cheer and sustain the soul weighed down by a sense of imperfection and unworthiness. If so, it is because we are accustomed to false and degrading conceptions of the Divine Being. Right views of him are suited not more to fill us with reverence, than with exalted love and unshaken trust. We regard it as one of the heaviest charges against that mass of gloomy and corrupt doctrines, which have for ages overshadowed Christianity, that they lead men to transfer to another those affections, which are primarily due only to the Supreme Divinity. They tend to exalt the Saviour above God in our love and esteem. It is not surprising, that a mind fully persuaded of the truth of the popular doctrines concerning God and Jesus, and thoroughly imbued with their spirit, should turn away with shuddering from the sterner attributes of the Father to repose in the milder nature of the Son. The latter is represented

as possessing a character far more attractive of the two. The Father is clothed with awe inspiring power, and holds the balance of inflexible and severe justice; the Son is surrounded with the more winning glories of placability and love. The Father, with the cruelty of a remorseless tyrant, dooms the whole human race to remediless and everlasting wo, to expiate the offence of their original ancestor; the Son, moved by infinite compassion, steps forward to turn aside his almighty wrath by his own death, and, as the price of his blood, is permitted to take a select number of ransomed souls with him to the abodes of heavenly felicity, the rest comprising a large part of mankind, being left to drag out a never-ending existence in sorrows unutterable. It would be strange if doctrines, fitted to leave such impressions on the mind, should nourish that spirit of deep and confiding piety, which looks to the Universal Father as the only refuge of the guilt-burthened and sorrow-stricken soul. But these doctrines Unitarianism rejects as absurd and monstrous fictions. We consider it one mark of its truth and great practical value, that it inculcates those views of God, which tend to render a belief of his all surrounding power and presence, not a chilling and melancholy persuasion, we would, if possible, forever banish from our minds, but a fond and cherished sentiment; one to which the mind naturally turns in sorrow, in weakness, in temptation, and the agony of disease and death; a sentiment, the destruction of which would darken the whole soul, and throw a more than funereal sadness over the universe.

Further, we shall be told, that admitting the efficacy of Christ's sufferings is to be attributed to the will and

acceptance of the Deity, still, the object for which he was suspended on the cross implies his divinity; that God in selecting an agent to accomplish this object was compelled, by the nature of the case, to fix on one partaking of the attribute of infinity. A finite being, it is said, could not make adequate propitiation for sin, because sin, viewed as committed against an infinite object, has infinite guilt, and therefore requires an infinite atonement, and such atonement could be made only by a being himself infinite.

It can scarcely be necessary to point out the fallacious reasoning, the flimsy, bare-faced sophistry contained in this and similar language, often used for the sake of popular effect.

In the first place, it is a gross abuse of terms to assert, that sin, because committed against an infinite Being, has in any sense, features of infinity. The nature of the object, against whom the offence is committed, aggravates it, only as it implies insensibility, presumption, or perverseness in the offender. To trespass against a Being, who deserves to be loved with all the understanding, soul, and strength, is an offence of an exceedingly dark hue. Still, it is human, it is finite; it is an act of a finite being, and as such can never partake of the character of infinity.

Besides, if sin is infinite, because committed against an infinite Being, then all and every sin is so, and therefore equal, for infinity admits of no degrees. The consequence is, that he that trespasses once is equally guilty in the sight of God, equally an object of his abhorrence with one, who trespasses with every breath. Nothing can add to the blackness of infinite guilt, nothing increase the load of it; and thus we hear it sometimes asserted, that

'one sin is sufficient to sink the sinner to the lowest depths of hell.'

A theory encumbered with such difficulties, we need not say, cannot be true. It is opposed to reason, to the common sentiments and common feelings of human nature. It confounds the distinctions of right and wrong, embarrasses our moral faculties, and destroys all confidence in their decisions. We have a new standard of merit and demerit, of virtue and vice, and before our language can become conformed to that standard, our mode of thinking and expressing ourselves on the moral qualities of temper and actions, the whole vocabulary of common life, in fact, as well as of ethics and religion, must undergo a revolution. — But I have bestowed more attention on the argument for the infinite nature of sin than it deserves. The bare statement of it is sufficient to refute it, for it bears the character of extravagance and absurdity on every feature.

I have intimated that the language alluded to, contains in it, in my judgment, barefaced sophistry. In truth, sophistry never appeared under a thinner veil, and I know not whether we ought to be more surprised at its grossness, or at the confidence, bold, unblushing confidence with which it is urged. Christ must have been an infinite being, we are informed, because no other could have made adequate atonement for sin. But would those, who reason thus, be really understood to say that an infinite being breathed out his soul in agony on the cross; that the God of nature was really betrayed, arrested, condemned, and executed as a malefactor, by finite and frail children of dust; that the omnipotent and omnipresent Creator and Preserv-

er of the universe was confined three days in a shroud and tomb furnished by the compassion of his creatures? Expressions implying something equivalent to this, it is true, occur both in older and more modern writings. But we are charitable enough to suppose, that they originate in mere carelessness, or a fondness for gross and overcharged pictures and representations; that were those, who use them, asked whether they meant to assert that God was really fastened to the cross, died, was buried, and the third day rose again, they would disclaim any such intention. The Deity is incapable of suffering. On the supposition, therefore, that Christ possessed a divine, as well as human, nature, he suffered only in the latter, only as man. No infinite nature suffered, or could suffer. Why then talk of an infinite atonement? No such atonement, in the sense in which it is understood by its advocates, was ever made, or could be made. The hypothesis of Christ's divinity does not provide for it, because it furnishes only a finite and human sufferer, and with respect to the satisfaction or atonement, therefore, is reduced to a level with the hypothesis of his simple humanity.

Let us not, then, be told that the object for which Christ died, implies his Divinity. No assertion can be more destitute of foundation, or more outrage reason and common sense. — But I forbear. Enough has been said to show, that the worth and efficacy of our Saviour's instructions and death depend on a consideration entirely foreign from the dignity of his nature.

III. So, too, I observe of the agency he now exercises, of whatever nature it be, it owes its whole interest and importance to the Divine will and appointment. His

inherent divinity is not made the basis of any of those benefits he confers on us, or of any act he performs, in his present state of exaltation, any more than of the benefits derived from his ministry and sufferings on earth. All the glories of that state, all the honors, privileges, and offices it implies, are expressly referred to the Father, 'who *made* him both Lord and Christ' (Acts ii. 36.) — 'who *exalted* him and *gave* him a name' (Phil. ii. 9.) — '*raised* him from the dead and *gave* him glory' (1 Pet. i. 21.) 'Appointed him heir of all things,' (Heb. i. 2.) —'*committed* all judgment to him,' having 'appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, *by that man whom he hath chosen*, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that *he hath raised him from the dead.*' (John v. 22; Acts xvii. 31.)

Nor are we authorized to say that any of these honors, or any part of this agency, suppose him originally to have partaken of a divine nature. The expressions, in which he is spoken of as having received power to judge the world, admitting that they are to be taken literally, and not as they may be understood, figuratively, as signifying only that we shall be judged according to the laws and spirit of his gospel, are far from implying any attributes strictly infinite. The scriptures certainly never allude to such attributes as necessary to the exercise of this power. They never in the remotest way insinuate, that it was bestowed on him because he possessed an exalted nature. Just the reverse. God 'gave him authority to execute judgment, *because he was the son of man*,' (John v. 27.) partook of our nature, and was, therefore, capable of being 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'

Our confidence in the Saviour, then, in what he did and suffered on earth, in what he now performs in heaven, in his past and future ministrations and offices, is inspired solely by a belief of his divine mission. All his sufficiency is of God, who sent him to be the Saviour of the world, and who, we are certain, would not leave him incompetent to the work committed to him. With the magnitude of that work we trust that we are as deeply impressed as are any of our fellow Christians, however they may differ from us in their views of the original attributes of Jesus. But had not God power to commit it to whom he would? Was he restricted in his choice of means? Who shall lay restraints on omnipotence? Who shall say that the universal Father, as the cause and fountain of all capacities and might, cannot clothe the humblest of his offspring with power adequate to accomplish the noblest purpose of his beneficence? Can any instrument be feeble in his hands? Can he not strengthen the weak, and perfect the frail? In providing for our rescue from sin, from suffering, and despair, was he compelled to act only through a particular medium? had he no choice of agents — no ability to raise up and endow whom he would? was he compelled to employ one, who partook of his nature and shared his throne? — Convinced that Jesus was commissioned and sent by him to be the dispenser of his best gifts to man, we think that we have sufficient reason for confiding in him. In doing this, we confide not in mere human, not in angelic and derived power and excellence; we rest on the truth, the wisdom, and beneficence of that great Being who formed, sustains, and fills all things.

The objection so strenuously urged against Unitarianism, that it does not fully meet the wants of the sinner,

does not provide for his pardon and security, thus disappears the moment we examine dispassionately the basis on which, according to the uniform language of the New Testament, our confidence in Jesus is placed. It originates altogether in a misapprehension concerning the ground on which he claims to be heard and trusted. If, divesting our understandings of the influence of popular and received opinions, we sit down calmly, and endeavor to ascertain the ultimate fact or doctrine on which the fabric of our hopes as Christians rests as its main pillar, we shall find that Unitarianism embraces this fact or doctrine, that it builds exclusively upon it, that it never ceases to urge it as the foundation of all our expectations of benefit from the Saviour. It thus has the advantage over all other systems, we think, in its truth, its beautiful simplicity, and its fitness to produce a deep and abiding effect on the heart. Instead of embarrassing our minds and taxing our credulity, by asking us to believe doctrines of which their mysterious, abstruse, and incomprehensible nature is their least obnoxious feature, it points to one great and primary fact or sentiment, which is level to every capacity, and the admission of which is enough to supply the strongest motives and excitements to virtue, enough for safety, for consolation, and for final happiness. — Far from having any tendency to fill the mind of the sinner with despair, it holds the only language which, as it seems to us, is capable of affording him any rational hope and trust. Did it direct his attention to the bought favor of a tyrant, — bought by the incarnation and sufferings of a God, — as the foundation of his safety, he might tell us that it taught a doctrine adapted only to inspire melancholy, distrust and terror. It is

true, he might say to us, you talk to me of a substitute, an exalted and innocent personage, on whom he has spent the swift arrows of his wrath ; and you inform me that he is now appeased, that his justice is satisfied, that he is willing and authorized to forgive. But, meanwhile, what a conception you have taught me to form of God ! What a monster you have held up as an object of my reverence and trust ! Surely, you do not ask me to repose confidence in such a Being. I can view him only with shuddering and horror. The belief that he formed and governs the universe would fill me with gloom, which nothing could effectually alleviate. It would be a truly appalling sentiment, an abhorred persuasion, from which I would willingly take refuge in the less chilling creed of the atheist.

But Unitarianism furnishes other ground of confidence and hope. It sooths and sustains the contrite and burdened spirit by carrying the thoughts up to the one infinite Father, who embraces the whole of his offspring in the arms of his benevolence, and whose unbought compassion raised up and sent Jesus with power to heal and to save. It presents to our anxious minds, a Being in whom our highest and best affections are capable of being concentrated, whom we can venerate, and love, and trust, not on account of what another has done or suffered to render him propitious, but on account of his own everlasting and unchangeable attributes. That such a doctrine should be charged with a tendency to weaken the foundation of the sinner's trust, and add despair to remorse, is really matter of no small surprise and astonishment. To us, we repeat, it appears to address him in the only language which is fitted to yield him

comfort and support. Instead of placing his expectations of pardon on a foundation, which may totter and sink under him, it places them on the only foundation which can never be shaken. The arm on which he leans, is omnipotent, and the rock of his trust the throne of the Eternal.

We are accused of not feeling sufficient veneration for the Saviour, of undervaluing what he has performed for us, of stripping his religion of all its noble and distinguishing attributes, of dimming its glories, and frittering it down to a system of dry, frigid, and lifeless morality. Such charges, we are willing to believe, originate in ignorance and misconception concerning the form in which christianity is received by us. Unitarianism has been misunderstood, or but imperfectly comprehended, by the great mass of those, who have been loudest in abusing and denouncing it. The term has suggested to the minds of its opponents only the vague idea of some monstrous and heart-chilling delusion, something hardly yielding, in impiety, to the imposture of Mahommed, a cunning forgery of Satan, fitted to inflate pride, and favor the indolent and corrupt propensities of the heart, by encouraging trust in human merit, administering opiates, using smooth and honeyed speech, and thus luring its dreamy and self-applauding votaries onward in the broad and downward road of destruction. That persons having these impressions on the subject of Unitarianism should think and speak of it with horror, need not surprise us. It is not, however, Unitarianism which they dread and war against in their minds, but a hideous phantom, a deformed spectre, which has no existence out of their own imaginations. Were Unitarianism understood by them,

we do not say that it would be in all cases approved. This is not to be expected, for it is opposed to some sentiments, which were probably among the first with which their minds were imbued, which struck deep root therefore, and which have been nourished and strengthened by a thousand influences. But we believe that it would be found, in a majority of instances, to coincide with their own views and feelings — those views and feelings, which are intrenched in the deepest recesses of their understanding and hearts — to an extent which would greatly astonish them. We believe that it would find an echo in many breasts, which now shudder at the very name of it; and that those who should continue to reject it as not conformable to truth, would, with few exceptions, view it with diminished horror and alarm. They would find it not that monstrous compound of impiety, folly, and pride, which they have been led to imagine it. They would not, we trust, discover us to be wanting in due veneration for the Saviour, and a due sense of the worth of his religion. — Is it nothing that we venerate him as a being divinely commissioned, and sent to be unto us a Prince and a Saviour, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Divinity—through whom God manifested himself, as he had never before manifested himself, to the world — who was the bright effulgence of the Father's glory, and express image, representative, copy or resemblance of his character and person — from whose words, life, and actions, breathed a spirit of divine wisdom and excellence — who was authorized to make known the conditions of human forgiveness — whose doctrines, example, and cross have a quickening and restoring efficacy—who, by the power and truth of God dwelling and operating in

'If God thought fit to accept for our redemption any price, there is nothing, that we know of, but his own wisdom, which could determine what price he would accept Hence I see no difficulty in admitting, that the death of an angel, or of a mere man might have been the price which God fixed upon. The *Socinians* contend, that Christ was a man, who had no existence before he was born of Mary; but they seem to me not to draw a just consequence, when from thence they infer, that an atonement could not have been made for the sins of mankind by the death of Jesus. The *Arians* maintain, that Jesus had an existence before he was born of Mary; and there is no reason for thinking, that the death of such a being might not have made an atonement for the sins of mankind All depends upon the appointment of God; and if instead of the death of a super-angelic, of an angelic, or of a human being, God had fixed on any other instrument as a medium of restoring man to immortality, it would have been highly improper in us to have quarrelled with the mean, which his goodness had appointed, merely because we could not see how it was fitted to attain the end.' — *Charge delivered* 1795.

II. I observed, (page 23,) that expressions implying that an infinite nature suffered, frequently occur in Trinitarian writers. Indeed the general strain of the language and reasoning employed by Trinitarians on the subject of the death of Christ is adapted to leave such an impression on the mind. If this impression is not designed, the expressions and reasoning alluded to, must be regarded as peculiarly unfortunate, and it is time they were discarded. But they are necessary, perhaps, to uphold the popular notion of the atonement, and gratify a love of the obscure, the marvellous, and strange. I might fill pages with specimens from writers above the ordinary level of modern scribblers for religious Magazines and Newspapers. Dr. Barrow, whose claim to rank in the class of old English Divines with Hooker and Taylor is fully settled, speaks of the 'immensity of worth and efficacy, which must needs accrue to the death of our Saviour — from his being God.' 'That the immortal God should die,' he adds with singular infelicity, 'as it cannot be heard without wonder, so it could not be undertaken without huge reason, nor accomplished without mighty effect.' Works, vol. ii. p. 290, Ed. Lon. 1716. Thus absurdly can men of the profoundest understandings, think and reason when fettered by the influence of theological systems.

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APOLOGIES

FOR

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TO

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EXAMINED.

BY SAMUEL BARRETT,

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

DECEMBER, 1834.

Price 4 *Cents.*

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL STREET.

APOLOGIES, &c.

It is my purpose in the following pages to offer a few remarks, such as it appears to me the times call for, on some of the apologies which certain persons occasionally make for not cherishing and manifesting a due interest in religion and its institutions. My readers will indulge me, I trust, in that plainness of speech and that directness of address, which, in the discussion of such topics, are both natural and useful.

What is religion? It is the convictions, sentiments, and actions, which befit man's relation to God and the spiritual world. What are the institutions of religion? They are the outward means, sanctioned directly or indirectly by divine wisdom and goodness, whereby those convictions are produced and strengthened, those sentiments are awakened and nourished, and those actions are prompted and perfected. What is it to cherish and manifest a due interest in religion and its institutions? The elements of a sufficient answer may be found within the sphere of men's secular pursuits. Look into the

house of merchandise, the mechanic's shop, the manufactory, the harvest field. What do you witness? Do you see minds faithless, so that they will not devise plans? Do you see hearts cold, so that they will not prompt to action? Do you see hands idle, so that they will not keep the wheels of business moving? Very little of this do you witness, and less of it do you hear any body approve. Men are not apt to be skeptical, indifferent, or sluggish, when worldly good is their object. This they know well enough how to prize, and any institution for securing this, they are ready enough to foster. When wealth, with its attendant advantages, is in prospect, what expense of thought will they not incur; what amount of feeling will they not bestow; what wear and tear of bone and muscle and fibre will they not endure, rather than fail of success. Then everything pertaining to the man, within and without, is activity, energy, zeal. Such it is to cherish and manifest a strong interest in secular pursuits. And like unto this is the interest men ought to cherish and manifest in regard to religion and its institutions.

Now, why is it otherwise with many? What are the reasons they allege for indifference to the whole subject of religion? What are the apologies they offer for excluding God, and a future life, and Christ, and all the realities of the spiritual world, from the number of those objects which they allow most strongly to engage their thoughts and feelings. What are the grounds on which they attempt to justify themselves in refusing to do anything for the support of religion and its institutions? I shall not undertake to state them all. I may not name even the most common ones. But I invite your attention to some of the excuses I have heard given,

and which, as they pass current with a class of persons in almost every community, deserve to have their unreasonableness shown. To begin then :

'There is nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth obliging us to support religion and its institutions ; and so we do not mean to have much to do either with the one or the other.' This is the sort of apology which some persons are beginning to make. But with what shadow of a good reason ? How shall I address these people ? Nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth *obliging* you! And has it come to this, that men, living in the nineteenth century, — in a civilized land, — in a christian community ,— descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, — can hold up their heads, under the light of day, amidst their fellow-citizens, and confess, without a burning blush, that they mean to do nothing more than they are *obliged* to do ? Nothing in the *laws of the Commonwealth !* What of that ? Are there no other laws binding on you? Not to speak of the laws of God in Holy Scripture, — what say you to the *natural* laws of self-protection, justice, benevolence ? Why, I should as soon expect a man would say, he did not mean to provide for his family, did not mean to help his neighbor raise the frame of a house or barn, did not mean to go to a town-meeting, because there is nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth obliging him to it.

What are the laws of the Commonwealth, that you should resolve to do no more than they enjoin ? Beyond and above all human enactments, stand the laws written by God on the heart, which no man can transgress with impunity. One of these is, that we be good and do good to the extent of our ability. Will any body

stake his reputation for intelligence and sound principle upon a denial of this? I think not. Well now, let me put to you this question: — In order to your being and doing good to the extent of your ability, are not religion and its institutions needed? Are not they useful? useful to yourselves? useful to the community? If any one says, no, then he belongs to a class whom it was not my purpose to address under this head. If he says, yes, then I ask him, — How can you justify it to your *conscience*, that you mean not to have anything to do with religion and its institutions? It is idle to plead the absence of all statutory law on the subject. The law written on the heart exists, which binds you to be and do good to the extent of your ability; and so long as you *believe* religion and its institutions to be useful, you are *obliged* by the law of conscience to take an interest in, and to foster them, as far as you can. Yes, it is an affair of conscience. In a case like this, you *must* follow the dictates of your settled belief. If you do otherwise, if you act contrary to those dictates, if, while thoroughly convinced of the great utility of religion and its institutions, you refuse to have anything to do either with the one or the other, I see not how you can answer it to your conscience, your country, or your God.

'But we helped build the meeting-house, we pay our proportion of the minister's salary, we contribute liberally for the support of public worship; and this, we think, is pretty well for us, without our trying to feel much interest in religion and its institutions.' Such is the apology of a second class of persons. Not a few seem to act upon the principle it involves. But is it reasonable so to do? Why, let me ask these men, have you done what you

have? why assisted to erect a church, to pay the preacher, and so forth? 'Because these things are good and useful.' But good and useful for whom? 'For the people.' But are not *you* a part of the people? 'Yes.' Are not your nature, relations, and wants the same with those of your fellow-men? 'Yes.' Do not you need, as well as they, the benefit of religion and its institutions? 'Yes; and we expect to get it.' But how? By treating them with coldness and indifference? How do you suppose the *people*, for whom you profess to have so tender a concern, are to be benefited by religion and its institutions? 'Oh! *they* of course must feel an interest in them, if they would be profited.' But are not you subject to the same law of cause and effect? Will *apathy* fit you, while nothing but *earnestness* can fit them, for the blessed influences of the Gospel? As truly might it be said, the light and warmth of the sun work precisely the same changes in the dead plant, that they do in the living one.

Besides, consider your *example*. Has it weight? So far as it has any, it goes to reduce those very people, for whom you boast having done so much, to a like state of coldness and indifference with yourselves; and then where, by and by, will be the advantage you expected *them* to derive? And suppose all were to take your course, as all have an equal right to do; — there would be meeting-houses, but none to fill them; there would be ministers, but none to hear them; there would be religious institutions, but none to profit by them; there would be Christianity in books, but none of it in the hearts and lives of men. Is this a consummation to be wished? Yet you are doing all you can to bring it about.

Then, too, what glaring *inconsistency* does not your conduct all along betray? Do you manage in any other affair, as you do in religion? Do you buy a farm, or fill a store, or erect a manufactory, and keep it in order, year after year, and all the while feel no interest in it? look for none of its legitimate results? never claim your own share of the profits? And yet, forsooth, you can help build a church, and pay towards the support of a minister, and assist in keeping the whole machinery of christian services in operation, and then *rest* in this; rest in the *means* without a thought or feeling about the *end;* — and, what aggravates your folly, can boastingly say, 'we think we have done pretty well, though we do cherish no hearty interest in religion and its institutions.' I want words to express my sense of such people's unworthiness.

'But there is so much difference of opinion and so many controversies about religion, that we do not care to feel any strong interest in it or in its institutions.' This is a third apology. Many urge it. But can there be anything more unreasonable? Suppose men were to act upon this principle in other matters; to what an extreme of destitution would they not bring themselves! Are there *any* great objects of human pursuit about which there are no differences of opinion, no controversies? Very few indeed. To be consistent, therefore, these objectors must abandon nearly every pursuit. But do they so?

There are differences of opinion and controversies about the methods of tilling the soil; do men on this account abjure agriculture? There are differences of

opinion and controversies as to the best modes of mercantile business; are men, in consequence, seen to shut up their counting rooms, unrig their ships, stop their banks, and cease from all traffic? There are differences of opinion and controversies touching the science of medicine and the art of surgery; do people therefore resolve not to have their broken bones set, nor their diseased bodies prescribed for? There are differences of opinion and controversies concerning politics; but does any wise man, on this ground, think himself justified in not feeling any concern for the government, its agents, or the laws? There are differences of opinion and controversies in respect to education; yet who would be so foolish as for any such reason, to become indifferent to the institutions of learning, and suffer his children to grow up in ignorance?

And so I might affirm and interrogate in regard to a thousand things, which nobody dreams of neglecting, on the ground, that men differ in opinion and dispute about them. Now, what I have to ask is, why not be at least as reasonable in matters pertaining to religion? Why turn away from this, the greatest and best of objects, merely because its teachers and professors do not agree in thought and word on all the points of doctrine and practice it involves? That man ought to cover his face for shame, who can be guilty of such inconsistency.

'But there is so much uncertainty in religion, that we do not feel inclined to take any great interest in its doctrines or in its institutions.' This fourth apology many of us have heard. But surely they who offer it must be wanting either in information, considerateness, or candor.

Uncertainty in religion! What am I to understand by this? Is it meant, that religion has not the support of mathematical demonstration? But religion is one of those subjects, which, from their very nature, do not admit of this sort of proof. Why demand an impossibility?

Again, what are the grounds on which you decide and act in other matters? The grounds of mathematical demonstration? No, but those of moral evidence — of testimony for instance — such precisely as we adduce to establish the truth of Christianity. Do you never go to law? Yes, and you risk your fortunes, your lives, on its decisions. But there is no such thing as mathematical demonstration in the law. All its proofs are of a moral kind, such as are brought to substantiate the facts of revealed religion. And just so it is in all the ordinary affairs of life; men do not refuse to decide and act, till they have demonstrative evidence that this or that course of conduct is the true and the best one. Why should they do otherwise in religion?

Nor is this all. It is within the limits of strict truth to say, that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, have for their support a body of probable evidence ten times stronger than what justifies you, and the multitude of your fellow-men, in the prosecution of many of those schemes of business, in which you and they hesitate not to engage with the utmost confidence and zeal. Nay more. Advert again to the law; and I will venture to affirm, that i you were to search the records of judicial proceedings from time immemorial, you would not find, in one case out of a hundred, anything comparable, in point of strength, to the proofs which may be adduced in support of the lead-

ing facts of the New Testament. Now if it be so, what gross inconsistency there is, to say nothing of the wickedness of it, in urging the uncertainty of religion as a reason for being indifferent to its claims.

'But religion has so much mystery about it, that we are not disposed to feel much interest in it or in its institutions.' This is the fifth apology. What shall I say to it? Mystery! Why, is there anything about which there is not mystery? If we care for nothing but what is unconnected with mystery, we shall care for very little. Look where we will among the objects of creation, or the events of Providence; everywhere we shall find mystery. Are we therefore to feel no interest in these objects and events? *Do* we feel no interest in them? Not so. Every day we see things, every day we witness occurrences, concerning the *how* and *why* of which we know just nothing at all. But we are not, on this account, indifferent to them. The mystery, deep as it is, does not prevent us from feeling and acting with reference to those things and those occurrences. *How* and *why* does the magnetic needle point to the north pole? No one knows; but this mystery does not cause men to cease making and using the mariner's compass. *How* and *why* does the electric fluid choose to travel on iron rather than on silk? No one knows; but this mystery does not hinder men from constructing and profiting by lightning rods. *How* and *why* does all matter tend to the earth or to the centre of the earth? No one knows; but this mystery does not prevent men, in their use of matter, from acting according to the law of gravitation.

And thus I might go on questioning without end. Everywhere in the world's objects and events there is mystery; yet everywhere are men interested and active. Why? Because there are, nevertheless, facts and truths enough known to engage their minds and hearts; and because also the mysterious parts are of little or no practical importance. So in religion. Suppose there was a hundred fold more mystery than the objector himself imagines; still there would be facts and truths enough that are perfectly simple, clear, and plain, for all useful purposes; and besides, the mysterious parts would probably be of little or no practical moment. Let it even be conceded, that all which the most extravagant have alleged of mysteries in religion, is strictly true; still there would be no more mystery in religion than there has been supposed to be in nature; and therefore to be void of interest in religion, because of its mysteries, would be at least as unreasonable as to be void of interest in nature, because of its mysteries.

But I go farther, and say, that in *revealed* religion there are, strictly speaking, no mysteries, — not one. It is true, revealed religion treats upon subjects *about which* there is much that is mysterious, i. e. *unknown*. But mark the distinction; — that which is thus mysterious *about* those subjects does not make any part of *revealed* religion; for what has been once revealed is, of course, no longer unknown, no longer a secret, no longer a mystery. For instance; many questions may be started *about* God, *about* Christ, *about* heaven, *about* hell, which revelation does not answer, and which therefore must continue involved in mystery. But revelation does not *profess* to an-

swer these questions; all that revelation professes to teach it does teach; and in this, i. e. in the actual revelation, there is no mystery.

And precisely the same may be said of all the subjects treated upon in the Sacred Scriptures. Many questions may be asked *about* these subjects which cannot be answered, which are still shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, every fact and every truth which revelation professes to teach, it does teach; and this, the actual revelation, so far from being a matter unknown, a secret, a mystery, is a simple, clear, intelligible proposition. In short, the region of mystery is not that of revelation, but that of non-revelation. And he, whoever he may be, that undertakes to apologise for his lack of interest in Christianity on the ground that it does not explain everything his wayward fancy may chance to fix upon, is as unreasonable, as would be the man who should affect to be indifferent to the light and heat of the sun, because of certain little dark spots he spies on its disk, the *why* and *wherefore* of which are mysteries to him.

'But religion is so unnatural a thing that we feel ourselves justified in not cherishing much love for it or for its institutions.' Here we have a sixth apology. A false theology has contributed to make it a common one. Yet there never was a more groundless pretence. Religion unnatural! whence came the thought? Not from the study of the history of mankind; for this teaches that no sentiment has been more prevalent, from the first ages to the present, than the religious sentiment. And surely, that which is thus co-extensive with the race is not hastily to be pronounced unnatural. Whence came the thought? Not from thorough acquaintance with the

principles of human nature; for they who have gone most deeply into investigations of this kind have, almost without exception, acknowledged that there is, in the depths of the soul, that which longs for, and seeks after something out of and above itself, which we call God; and something higher and more enduring than the present life, which we call Immortality.

How is it then, that there are persons who deem religion an unnatural thing? The question is easily answered. Men are apt to judge of matters according to their own peculiar tastes; and as some happen to have little or no taste for religion themselves, they fancy it to be what mankind at large have not a relish for — what human nature itself revolts at. But how comes it that any get this distaste for religion, if, as I maintain, religion is so natural to man? Let me answer the question, by asking another: — How comes it that any get a distaste for other things, universally acknowledged to be natural; such, for instance, as activity, society, friendship? There are those who seem to dislike even these. Why? Not because their nature is adverse; not because they were endowed with no original tendencies to activity, society, and friendship; but because their nature, their original tendencies, have, in some way or other, been neglected, thwarted, or abused in these respects. Parents and instructers did not draw out and give a right direction to the inborn principles of activity, society, and friendship, in this class of persons, when young; or they themselves, as they grew up, neglected or abused these principles, and so have become what they are. But have these haters of activity, society, and friendship, any good reason, therefore, to pronounce it

unnatural to mankind to be active, social and friendly ? No one in his senses will pretend it.

Just so in respect to religion. A man has no good reason for calling this unnatural, merely because he finds little or nothing in it accordant with his own feelings ; nor, I will add, for calling it so on any account. The truth is, it is not religion, but irreligion that is unnatural. It is not they who respect, love, and practice piety, that act contrary to the original tendencies and impulses of human nature, but they who prefer and practice impiety. Yes, the irreligious man as truly acts an unnatural part, as he does, who hates his father and mother.

'But religion has been the cause of such evils in the world, that we deem it safest to keep as much as possible aloof from it and its institutions.' This is the seventh apology. But of what evils has religion been the *cause ?* I know that many evils have accompanied the progress of religion in all ages ; but was religion the cause of them ? Would there have been fewer such evils as the objector has in view, if there had never been any religion in the world ? I am told of wars ; but would there have been fewer wars, if religion had not existed ? I am told of heartburnings and enmities ; but are not these at least as frequent and bitter where there is little religion, as where there is much ? I am told of enthusiasm and fanaticism; but there are these, and have been these, as violent, not to say more so, about politics and some other matters, as about religion. I am told of persecutions; but men have persecuted, and do persecute still, without a thought of religion. The truth is, it is unjust to say that religion has been the cause of such evils ; for they would have

existed without it. The proper statement is, not that religion has been the *cause* of them, but that it has been *a subject about which* men's passions have been set on fire. These passions would have burned as fiercely, to say the least of them, about other things, had religion never visited the earth.

Nor am I restricted to so limited a ground of defence. I am authorized by history and observation to affirm, that it is owing to religion, more than to anything else, that the very evils adduced, have not been ten times worse than they actually have been. But suppose it were not so; suppose on the contrary that religion has occasioned, in one way or another, some evils in the world, surely no one will affirm that they are the direct, legitimate result of pure religion; for if anything under heaven is true, it is this, that the direct, legitimate result of pure religion is peace, and good-will, and general virtue. The only way in which religion can have, in any degree, occasioned evil to mankind, is that of its abuse. But every one must acknowledge the unreasonableness of rejecting a good thing merely for its abuse. On this principle, everything must be rejected — even the air we breathe, the water we drink, the fire that warms us; for what has not been abused?

'But if religion be not responsible for the evils that have followed in its train, still we do not see that it does much good; and so cannot feel any great interest in it or in its institutions.' This is the eighth apology, and the last I shall notice. Several persons are beginning to talk in this strange way; but is it with any show of reason or good sense? Are there not many things deemed

most precious by us, the utility of which we cannot see? But I will not insist upon this. What is it, let me ask these persons, what is it that in your opinion does do good? 'Why, everything does good that promotes human virtue and happiness.' Very well; so far we are agreed; I am glad to find you disposed to take so high a ground. Everything then does good that promotes human virtue and happiness. Now let me put another question; — Can you seriously think that religion, or a true regard to God and a future world, does not promote human virtue and happiness? 'We doubt whether it does.' But on what account — for what reasons do you doubt? 'Why, there are persons of our acquaintance who make no *profession* of religion; and yet they appear to be virtuous and happy enough.' But why do you thus *assume* that where there is no profession there is no religion? There are many, how many you cannot tell, who keep their religion concealed; they worship God in secret; they meditate on eternity in secret; and from this their secret piety derive strength to their virtues and fulness to their satisfactions.

'Yes, but we are acquainted with persons who not only make no open profession of religion, but do not even pay any attention to it in secret; and yet they seem virtuous and happy enough.' Indeed! how do you know that they pay no attention to religion in secret? Are you always with them? Can you discern their inmost thoughts? But not to dwell on this; what if it be true of some, that they pay no particular attention to religious subjects *now*? It does not follow that they *never* have done so; and of course it does not follow that their virtue and happiness owe nothing to their piety.

Were not these persons religiously educated? Now the effects of education are not soon lost. The early impressions of God, of his providence, of another world, are not easily effaced. They dwell in the soul long after the individual has ceased to give, consciously, any particular attention to religion; and from these impressions much that is virtuous and happy in those to whom you refer me may have been derived. Nor only so. It is to be remembered that these moral and happy men, whom you bring to prove the uselessness of religion, live in a religious community, breathe a religious atmosphere, and therefore can hardly avoid having their habits of virtue, and consequently their happiness, influenced in some degree, by religious sentiments. Though they take no special pains to cherish these sentiments themselves, yet their characters and conduct and satisfactions may be greatly, though insensibly, affected by religion, in an indirect manner, through sympathy with others and the power of public opinion.

'Ah! but we have known a man who was so far from either professing religion publicly, or seeming to pay any attention to it in secret, that he actually stood forth its declared hater and decided opposer.' And do you here refer me to one who believed not in the existence of a God, nor in the fact of a future life, — one who saw not in all this wisely constituted world the traces of Divine wisdom, nor in all the sources of joy around him the marks of Divine beneficence, — one who had no belief in anything beyond the present scene of things, but supposed that all distinctions of virtue and vice, even the soul itself, will be as nothing when the breath leaves the body? Is it such a man you bring to

prove that human virtue and happiness do not depend at all on religion? But are you sure he was in his right mind? Can you avouch for his soundness of intellect? There are no extravagances into which the human imagination will not sometimes run, in moments of mental hallucination. Do you say he was sane? Then I ask if he was virtuous and happy? Suppose me to grant, for a moment, that he was; — in what degree? was he as much so as he might have been, had he not parted with the thought of God and immortality? Impossible in the nature of things, if he possessed the essential attributes of humanity. Virtuous and happy as he was, a pure religion *must* have made him more so. And as to the measure of virtue and happiness he did attain — how came he by so much as this? Surely it was not in *consequence* of his infidelity,—it was in *spite* of his infidelity. But could one man in a thousand, with his principles, have escaped vice and misery? Why was *he* able to succeed so well, without religion? Was it not owing to something peculiar in his outward circumstances, or in his internal organization, or in both? Was it not because his condition in life had always been such as to exempt him, in a remarkable degree, from the world's temptations and sorrows? Was it not because he was differently constituted, in mind and heart, from ninety-nine-hundredths of his fellowmen? Why then bring *him* to prove the inutility of religion? It is to argue from the exception instead of the general rule. It is somewhat like saying that because the Springfield somnambulist could see to read with her eyes shut, therefore almost every body can do so too. Can *mankind at large* do without

religion? This is the question; and it avails nothing towards determining it, to cite a rare case of an individual, who, because he was singularly organized or placed in extraordinary circumstances, contrived, for a time, to be tolerably virtuous and happy without its aid.

But I have not yet done with the individual. Again I ask, was he virtuous and happy? Are you willing to lay your hand on your heart, and declare to me that you know he was a virtuous and a happy man? I strongly suspect he was not. I suspect, if you could have followed his way a little, you would have found him an immoral and an unhappy man. Let it be, if you insist upon it, that he was honest in his common dealings and amiable in promiscuous society; this, public opinion or a regard to worldly interest might have prompted him to. But — and this is the great question — but are you certain he was pure and holy in secret? Would you have intrusted him with your most cherished treasure where the eye of the world could not follow him? Was he the man to whom you would have willingly committed your wife for protection, and your children for education? But why not, if religion does nothing for virtue? There are hundreds of your religious acquaintances to whom you would not hesitate a moment to do this. Let it be, too, if you insist upon it, that he appeared happy, even joyous, when abroad, in the open day, amidst the crowd, where he felt that he had a part to act, and was ambitious to seem gay as the gayest. This it is not uncommon for the miserable to practise from various motives. But—and this again is the great question—but are you certain that he suffered nothing from his unbelief, in his solitary hours? Was it no source of pain to him, do

you think, that go where he would, he could not discern in the wide world, a single mark of an all perfect, all pervading Spirit, his Creator, his Benefactor, his Father, tender and compassionate, before whom he could open his heart with filial trust and affection? Was it no source of pain to him, do you think, that when he looked forward, as he sometimes must, he could not catch the least ray of hope as to an existence beyond the confine of the present world; but must calculate on utter annihilation, at a period not far distant at the most — possibly very near him — at any rate one to which every moment was bringing him closer and closer?

Besides, my friend, did you ever see this man in trouble? and did he sustain it nobly? Did you ever see this man beside a dying child, wife, friend? and would you, for the universe, have exchanged the Christian's consolations for his? Did you ever see this man assailed by a strong temptation to swerve from the rules of rectitude for the sake of great gain in prospect? and did he resist it firmly? Did you ever see this man prostrate on a sick bed, the gates of the grave fast opening before him? and was he unappalled? — was he calm? — was he happy? Did you ever see this man — but I forbear the painful question. Let a veil be thrown over the last scene of him, who knew no God, and who had no hope of immortality! — There are other and more grateful topics for our thoughts.

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness! Then why is it so clear that we were created to be religious? How has it come to pass that we have as much evidence of a capacity for religion, as of a capacity for anything? Why does man

carry within himself a natural sentiment of piety — an inborn instinct, if I may so speak, for God and immortality, which has manifested itself, in one form or another, in all ages and in all nations?

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness! Then why does the outward creation seem contrived as if on purpose to awaken and nourish the pious feelings? Why does the extent and grandeur of the universe speak to man, in language which he cannot resist, of the wisdom and power of the Creator? Why is it that in every vegetable, in every animal, especially in the beneficent suitableness of all things, within, above, and around him, to his wants, he cannot but discern proofs of a Father's providence and love? And why, moreover, is the whole course of the divine government fitted to fortify his convictions, from other sources derived, that the present life is but the infancy of his being — that there will, must be, another state of existence for the completion of what, it is so clear, the Father of our spirits designed should only be commenced on earth?

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness! Then why have we the united testimony of hnndreds, of thousands, of millions, nay, of all who have experienced religion's true power, that every feeling of piety to God, and every hope of a future life, are precisely what man needs; are suited to fill up in his soul what else would be a painful void; are adapted to support, comfort, encourage, and ennoble him? Surely, if actual experiment, — experiment tried by multitudes, tried long, and tried in every possible combination of circumstances, has decided any question, it

has determined this, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that religion, pure and undefiled, is essential to the perfection of human nature.

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness! Then why such an expense of special means on the part of the Infinite and Eternal? Why God's wonderful dealings with his chosen people, the Jews? Why that long line of prophecy, not yet completely fulfilled? Why the extraordinary mission, life, death, and resurrection of the Saviour of the world? Why the remarkable succession of apostles, and reformers, and martyrs, and the surprising spread and triumphs of Christianity, — all indicating, in a manner not to be mistaken, a power and wisdom above nature, and operating for the moral good of our race?

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness! Whence, then, this irresistible argument to prove the essential importance of religion, especially of Christianity, to the best interests of man,—to wit, that in whatever direction we look, whether to nations or smaller communities, we find, without a single exception I think, that where religion is least known and least felt, there the people are most degraded; and where religion is best understood and best applied to practice, in its own purity and power, there the people are most highly elevated in point of intelligence, virtue, and happiness?

Brethren, what considerations are these, and such as these, to awaken in us all a due interest in religion and its sacred institutions! It only remains in conclusion, to adjure you, solemnly and affectionately, by all that

is to be feared and loved in Almighty God; by all that is worthy of admiration and gratitude in Jesus Christ; by all that is beautiful and sublime in piety and virtue; by all that gives peace and joy on earth, and fits for happiness in heaven,—so to regard, henceforward, whatever pertains to religion and its institutions, as that, through their blessed influences, you may be made partakers, both in the present and the future world, of that high intellectual, moral, *spiritual* excellence and enjoyment, which God hath promised to the faithful, and which alone are worthy the chief aim of immortal beings.

1st Series. No. 91.

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RELIGIOUS FEELINGS.

BY JASON WHITMAN.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

JANUARY, 1835.

Price 4 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL STREET.

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ON

RELIGIOUS FEELINGS.

We sometimes meet with those who are tremblingly alive to the necessity of religion, who are earnestly desirous of becoming personally holy, but who, through their very tenderness of feeling, are filled with doubts in regard to their real condition. These doubts have reference to their religious feelings, to their origin, their intensity and the danger of being deceived in regard to their true character and proper influence. And this is a most delicate and difficult case. These doubts are perfectly natural, and *may* indicate a proper state of feeling in him who is the subject of them. They are also highly salutary and ought not to be treated harshly, lest they be chilled into indifference. But then, on the other hand, they may be treated too tenderly and dwelt upon too long, and so may become the causes of real evil, by destroying religious happiness and preventing religious improvement. It is important therefore that we form clear and definite no-

tions of the principles by which religious feelings are to be estimated. The following pages are the result of an attempt to remove some of the most common doubts, and to state some of the most important principles upon the general subject of religious feelings.

I. And, first; — Doubts sometimes arise in regard to the *origin* of religious feelings. Here is one who was formerly indifferent upon the subject of religion. He was not guided by its principles, nor influenced by its motives. He had no firm belief in its reality. He felt not its importance. But he has entirely changed. He now not only believes religion to be important to the community at large, he feels that it is absolutely necessary to himself in particular, that it is necessary to his highest present happiness, and to all his hopes of future felicity. He is consequently striving to become truly religious, to govern himself in thought, feeling, affection, purpose and conduct, by the motives and principles of the Gospel. And yet this individual is filled with doubts and fears. He fears that the change he has experienced is not the legitimate consequence of religious influences, that it is but the natural result of advancing years, of blunted sensibilities, or of altered circumstances. Or it may be that his fears arise from the circumstance that there has been nothing sudden, powerful, or peculiar in the manner of his change, that, both at its commencement and in its progress, it has come gradually and at the time almost imperceptibly over him. For these, or perhaps for other similar reasons, he is filled with doubts in regard to the *origin* of his religious feelings. But from whatever circumstances his doubts may arise, they

are to be removed by the application of one or two general principles, together with the practical inferences which are naturally drawn from them.

1st. The first general principle to be noticed is this ; *That there is such a marked difference between the proper fruits of religious influence and all other changes which the heart and the life may undergo, that the sincere enquirer, who diligently and prayerfully studies the sacred scriptures, and faithfully compares his motives and his conduct with the tests of christian character there made known, need not be deceived in regard to himself.*

But are there no instances of self-deception, it will be asked, among those who are sincere and earnest in their religious inquiries? Most surely there are many such instances. But it is not because there is, in the nature of the case, any necessity for self-deception. It is because those who deceive themselves neglect to acquire clear and scriptural views of what constitute the genuine evidences of the christian character, or through the partiality of self-love favor themselves in their self-examinations, or fix upon some one christian grace or virtue by which to judge of themselves, instead of taking a comprehensive view of the whole christian character. We should then ever cherish a deep sense of our danger of self-deception, should ever watch carefully the many windings and devices of our own hearts, should ever guard against the influence of self-love in giving false colorings and partial views. But at the same time it is of the utmost importance that we constantly cherish a feeling of perfect confidence in the principle stated. Indeed, most deplorable would be our condition if, after having required us to form religious characters, our

Heavenly Father has left us to remain in uncertainty, or has exposed us to the necessity of self-deception, in our attempts to determine whether the characters we are forming do in reality manifest the proper fruits of religious influence. We may rest assured, from the very character of God, that he has not left us in this deplorable condition; that he has given us in the sacred scriptures a standard of christian character by the use of which, if we are faithful to ourselves, we may determine our condition without the necessity of self-deception. We may rest assured that there is truth, important truth, in the principle stated. But this truth will be more clearly brought out if we dwell for a moment upon the proper fruits of religious influence.

What then are the proper fruits of religious influence? The answer is ready. A "sober, righteous and godly life." But when this answer is given, is it not meant, that this soberness, righteousness and godliness of life should proceed from right motives, proper feelings and correct principles? Is it not impossible that there should be any true holiness of life, unless it is based upon right motives and correct principles? We are to regard the outward conduct, as a stream, which is to be traced back to the fountain whence it flows, if we would ascertain its true and permanent character. It may be that a period of religious excitement has swelled the stream of religious feeling even to overflowing, and has led to present religious exertions far beyond what the general strength of religious principles will permanently sustain. It may be, that circumstances will give to conduct an appearance altogether different from what would be pre-

sented by that same conduct when viewed in connexion with the motives by which it is prompted. We must look then at both, the outward conduct and the inward feelings and motives, to learn whether our characters manifest the proper fruits of religious influence. If we look at the outward conduct alone we may be deceived. For advancing years, sated desires, blunted sensibilities, altered circumstances, a regard for public opinion, these and many other similar causes may give rise to a manifest change in the outward conduct, and may produce a correctness and propriety of deportment, which can with difficulty be distinguished from that produced by religious influence. And if we look at the inward feelings and motives alone we may be deceived. For temporary religious excitement may fill the heart for a season with religious feelings and pure motives, while yet there is no fixed religious principle permanently influencing the conduct. If then we would speak accurately, we should say that the proper fruits of religious influence consist in a sober, righteous and godly life, proceeding from a heart right with God. And if we would avoid self-deception, we should ask, not merely whether our hearts are right with God, but whether this state of our hearts be manifested by lives of obedience to the spirit, principles, and precepts of the Gospel of the Son of God.

It is this twofold character of real religious influence, reaching as it does both the outward conduct and the inward feelings and motives, and bringing the whole into a conformity with the Gospel standard, which, if we will attend to it, will secure us from self-deception. For, while there are some circumstances which will produce a change

of outward conduct, and others which will produce a change of inward feelings and motives, nearly resembling the changes which are the result of religious influence, there is no circumstance nor combination of circumstances, which will produce a permanent change of both inward feelings and outward conduct, corresponding with each other, and with the change which is the legitimate consequence of religious influences. In our examination of ourselves then, we may rest assured, that how great soever may have been our change of conduct, if it be not based upon and supported by feelings and motives that are in accordance with the Gospel standard, it is not a change produced by religious influence. And so too in regard to our religious excitements, we may rest assured that how great soever may have been our change of feelings, if it have not resulted in a permanent change of conduct, if it have not led to devotion of heart, and obedience of life, it is not the legitimate consequence of religious influence. On the other hand, if, after faithful examination, we are satisfied that our change of conduct is based upon and supported by right feelings and proper motives, or that our religious excitement has resulted in devotion of heart and life to the principles of the Gospel, we may have confidence that the change we have experienced is the legitimate consequence of religious influences. Let it then be deeply impressed upon the mind, as a general principle, that there is a marked difference between the proper fruits of religious influence, and every other change which the heart and the life may undergo, and let the feeling be confidently cherished, that, with faithful and prayerful examination of the scriptures and of our own hearts and lives, and an impartial com-

parison of the one with the other, we need not be deceived in regard to ourselves.

2d. The second general principle to be noticed is this; *That, if the proper fruits of religious influence have been produced in the heart and life, the question in regard to the peculiar circumstances by which the attention was first directed to the subject of religion is one of no consequence whatever. It is a matter of perfect indifference in what way it may be answered.*

It will be perceived, upon a moment's reflection, that the circumstances, upon which the doubting mind dwells with anxiety, are those which were the apparent means of leading the attention to the subject of religion. Here is one who fears that his change of feelings is the result of advancing years. It may be true, that advancing years have checked the impetuosity of youthful passions, have disposed to thought and reflection, have excited careful inquiry in regard to present character, future prospects and eternal hopes, and may thus have been the means employed by God in his providence to lead the attention to the subject of religion. Here is another, who fears that his change of feelings and of character may have been the result of a reverse of fortune. It may be true, that, during the enjoyment of prosperity, and while in the possession of abundance, the heart was elated, and God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, was forgotten. It may be true, that a reverse of fortune has awakened a sense of dependence, has forced upon the mind a view of obligations and duties, and has excited sorrow for past ingratitude. It may be, that, in this way, a reverse of fortune has been the apparent means in the providence of

God, of leading the individual to the scriptures for instruction, and to God in prayer for forgiveness, assistance and final acceptance.

But, in regard to these and all similar cases, it is to be particularly noticed, that the feelings, which arise as the natural result of advancing years, altered circumstances or other similar causes, only precede, and are entirely distinct, from those which are the legitimate consequence of religious influences. These circumstances may serve to awaken the attention, to direct it to the subject of religion, and to fix it there. And then, as a natural consequence of a devoted attention to the subject of religion, the proper fruits of religious influence appear in the heart and life. In cases like this there is often a confusion of ideas. The final result is attributed to the circumstances which apparently served to awaken the attention. But there are instances in which these previous feelings spend their force without leading to any permanent good results. There may have been, in consequence of severe sickness, a reverse of fortune, or some similar circumstance, much thought and reflection, much careful inquiry upon the subject of religion even. But the whole has passed away, and no lasting good effects have been produced. In instances like these, it is easy to understand the distinction between feelings, which are the natural result of the circumstances in which we are placed, and those which are the legitimate consequences of religious influence.

If we keep this distinction in view, it will at once be perceived that the question to be settled in the doubting mind is, not "by what peculiar circumstances, or in what particular manner was the attention first awakened to

the subject of religion?" It is, "what have been the lasting consequences of this awakening?" The first of these questions may be answered in a vast variety of ways. For there are almost as many different ways in which the attention has been first excited to the subject of religion, as there are different individuals who have attended to the subject. But, in regard to the second of these questions, there is but one answer which should be regarded as satisfactory. That answer should ever, in substance be, "the result of our awakening has been a heart filled with love to God — love to Christ and love to man, evincing its state by a life of devotion, obedience and beneficence." And if this second question can receive at the hands of our consciences this only satisfactory answer, it is a matter of perfect indifference in what way the other be answered.

Does any one doubt this? To him I would say, inquire of practical Christians of your acquaintance, to whatever denomination they may belong, in regard to the origin of their religious feelings, the commencement of their religious experiences, and you will find that their attention was first directed to the subject of religion in a vast variety of ways; that different individuals were first awakened by different circumstances. One, it may be, was first awakened by a severe fit of sickness, another, by the death of some near and dear friend, one, by being stript of property, another, by some peculiar instance of providential goodness; one, by an arousing discourse, another, by a plain and affectionate conversation, one, in the excitement of a protracted meeting, another, in the calmness of his own retirement, one, in so sudden and peculiar a manner as to be able to fix upon, and ever

remember, the precise moment and the particular circumstances, another, in so silent and gradual a manner that the commencement attracted no particular notice, and the time and circumstances have been forgotten. In all these, and in a vast variety of other ways, has the attention of those who are allowed by all to be truly religious, been first awakened to the subject of religion.

But why are such regarded as truly religious? Is it because they were first awakened in some peculiar manner, or because they manifest in their lives the proper fruits of religious influence? Most surely it is on the latter account. On what ground should their own religious joy be based? Should they rejoice in the peculiarity of the manner in which their attention was first led to the subject of religion, or in the lasting consequences of having attended to it? Most surely the latter is the only proper ground of true religious joy.

The scriptures afford confirmation of the position, that, while the proper fruits of religious influence are ever the same, the attention of individuals may be first awakened to the subject in different ways. At the feast of Pentecost, three thousand were awakened from indifference by a pointed and arousing discourse from the ardent Peter, while the jailor was aroused by an entirely different circumstance. By a commotion of the earth which caused great fear was he led to ask what he should do to be saved. When new converts were admitted by the apostles to the fellowship of the church, they were asked, not in what manner they were first awakened, but simply whether they believed. Since, then, God in his providence employs different means and circumstances to lead the thoughts to the subject of religion, the conclu-

sion is forced upon us that the question, as to the particular circumstances in which our attention to the subject of religion originated, is one of no importance whatever. It matters not which of a vast variety of answers may be given to it. Let us strive then to keep our minds directed to the proper point of inquiry, to the question, "whether the proper fruits of religious influence do actually appear in our hearts and lives;" and let it ever be remembered that, if this question can be answered at the hands of our consciences in the affirmative, we may safely dismiss all doubts in regard to the other.

The practical inference to be drawn from these two general principles seems to be plain. When doubts arise in the mind in regard to the *origin* of our religious feelings, we are not to dwell upon them too long, nor to dismiss them too abruptly. There is danger in either course. If we dwell upon our doubts and suffer them, according to their natural tendency, to confine our inquiries to the circumstances by which our attention was first awakened, we shall find no rest to our souls. We shall enjoy none of the exercises of religion, none of the promises of the Gospel. For we shall doubt whether we can properly engage in the one, or rightly appropriate to ourselves the other. We shall waver in all our religious purposes, and shall be unable to go forward with resolution and firmness to perfect ourselves in the christian character, as long as we are filled with doubts lest our experiences are not the genuine influences of religion. And then, on the other hand, if we dismiss our doubts at once, there is danger that we shall be left in a state of carelessness and indifference as to our real condition, which may result in our spiritual ruin. Let us then endeavor to improve

aright these doubts, which are permitted by our Heavenly Father for some good purpose. Let them teach us, in the first place, to search the scriptures faithfully and prayerfully, that we may learn the true tests, the genuine evidences of christian character. Let them lead us, in the second place, to a careful and thorough examination of our own hearts and lives, and to an impartial comparison of these with the Gospel standard. In the pursuit of this course, with an humble reliance upon the blessing of God for success, we may hope for guidance from above, and shall, without doubt, find joy and peace in believing.

II. In the second place; doubts frequently arise in regard to the intensity of religious feelings. Here is one who is conscious of having felt sincere sorrow for past transgression, and of being truly desirous of living more free from the love and influence of sin in future. He is conscious of having sought fervently for pardon at the throne of God, in the name of Jesus the Mediator, and of being earnestly engaged in faithful endeavors to understand all christian truth and to practice all christian duty. But, as he converses with others, he hears them speaking of their deep, and agonizing sorrow for sin; and he is satisfied that he has himself never experienced such heart-rending agony. He hears them speaking of their dark despair, lest God should refuse to pardon, and of their trembling dread, lest he should cut them off in his anger. But he is not himself conscious of ever having trembled through fear of the wrath of God. He hears them speaking of the ecstacy of joy, which has succeeded to their dread and despair, of their bright visions of future glory, and of their full as

surance of final acceptance. But he is not himself conscious of ever having experienced such ecstatic joy, such bright visions, such full assurance. When, therefore, he compares his own spiritual condition with the relations of others, he is filled with doubts lest his religious feelings are not sufficiently intense, lively and ardent; lest his religious services are too cold and formal. While these doubts are cherished he dares not rejoice in the change of feelings which he has experienced, through fear that he may be deceived in regard to the nature of that change; he dares not go forward in the religious course, through fear that every step he may take will only lead to greater condemnation. His religious happiness is thus destroyed, and his religious improvement prevented by his doubts in regard to the *intensity* of his religious feelings. Here, as before, the doubts that arise are to be removed by the application of one or two general principles, together with the practical inferences naturally drawn from them.

1st. The first general principle to be noticed is this; *That religious feelings are only the natural feelings of the man, directed to the subject of religion, and that, consequently, they will vary with all the variety of individual temperament and of outward circumstances, which cause variation, either in the feelings themselves or in the manner of their manifestation, upon other subjects.*

The different individuals of the human family are differently constituted, and vary much from one another in their natural temperament. One is of a calm and even temperament, he is seldom much elated above or much depressed below the usual tenor of his feelings. Circumstances the most joyful do indeed give him joy. But then his joy, though deep and heartfelt and lasting, is calm and quiet.

There is no ecstacy, no bursting forth of joyous feeling. Circumstances of a sorrowful nature do indeed fill his heart with real sorrow. But they produce no violent agitation, no settled depression of spirits. Another is of an entirely different natural temperament. In joyful circumstances he is ever in an ecstacy of joy. In mournful circumstances he is ever in an agony of grief. Perhaps we may have seen examples of these different temperaments, in individuals called to pass through the same scenes of affliction, to mourn the loss of the same near and dear relative. One was calm, even cheerful, it may be, while yet the heart was deeply wounded, — the spirit sorely afflicted. He could move with his accustomed regularity in the discharge of all the duties appropriate to his situation. We may indeed have occasionally heard a sigh, or discovered a straggling tear, but this was all there was of outward manifestation of grief. The other was convulsed with agony, and unfitted for exertion. We heard continual sighing and sobbing. Every allusion to the departed friend brought forth a new gush of tears, and caused the whole frame to shake with inward anguish of spirit. But, as we watched these individuals, we perceived that as marked and as permanent effects were produced in the one case as in the other. That the sorrow of the one, if more calm, was equally deep and lasting with that of the other. In cases like these, it will at once be admitted that there is a natural difference of temperament, causing a difference either in the feelings themselves — or in the manner of their manifestation. The one either feels more sensibly and keenly, or manifests his feelings in a more boisterous manner.

Suppose that these two individuals become interested in

the subject of religion. The difference in their natural temperaments, which causes a difference of feeling in regard to other subjects, will cause difference in regard to the subject of religion. Their sins may be brought home to them with equal force. The convictions of the two may be equally strong, yet there will be a difference in their appearance. One will be calm and quiet, even cheerful it may be, and will move regularly on in his accustomed course. The other will be wholly unfitted for all duty, not able to see or converse with friends, bathed in tears, convulsed with sobs. Yet, if we watch them, we shall find perhaps that the permanent effects produced in the one case are as great as those produced in the other. The convictions of the one, though less convulsing, are equally lasting with those of the other.

Or suppose these two individuals to have equally clear views of Gospel promises, equally bright hopes of heavenly happiness, the manifestation of religious joy will be different in the two cases on account of their difference of natural temperament. This supposed case, which has many counterparts in real life, serves to illustrate, in part, the principle stated, that the religious feelings are but the natural feelings of the man directed to the subject of religion, and are consequently subject to all the variety of individual temperament. Now there is a vast variety of individual temperament, causing not only variation in the feelings themselves, but also in the manner of their manifestation. Some are ever bold and confident, others are always fearful, trembling. Some are prone to tell of their feelings, others to brood over them in silence. But as men become interested in the subject of religion they go to it with all their natural peculiarities about them.

He, who is bold and confident in regard to other subjects, will be so in regard to this. He, who is timid and fearful, will be timid and fearful still. He, who is prone to tell of his feelings upon other subjects, will be prone to speak of his religious feelings, while he, who broods over his feelings upon other subjects in silence will be silent in regard to these.

Again, our feelings upon all subjects are much affected by our outward circumstances. Where several, who are engaged in the same pursuit, are often together, conversing with each other upon the object of their affections, its importance, its true nature, the obstacles in the way of its attainment, the means they have respectively adopted to overcome these obstacles, together with the success with which their exertions have been crowned, and the degree of progress which has been made, they increase each other's ardor, arouse each other to zealous exertion. The feelings of the individuals become more and more intense. But, had these same individuals been so situated that each must have been by himself, pursuing the object of his affections alone, their feelings would have been less lively and ardent, though they might have been equally powerful and efficient. Equal progress may perhaps be made towards the attainment of the object, but there will be less consciousness of intense feeling. As it is in regard to other subjects, so it is in regard to religious subjects. If we have become interested in the subject of religion, and are in the midst of those who are equally interested with ourselves, conversing with each other upon the common object of our affections, and upon our feelings in regard to it, speaking of our sorrow for sins, of our doubts and fears ; of our hopes and anti-

cipations, we shall become excited and shall be conscious of much liveliness and intensity of feeling. But, if we are alone, left to our own reflections, with no companions but our bible, our consciences, and our God, although we may be conscious of emotions, deep and powerful, although we may be cherishing a tender sensibility to all religious truths, motives and duties, although we may be conscientiously engaged in the discharge of all known duty, — yet there will be less excitement of feeling.

And then, too, the feelings are much affected by the state of the health. There are times when our feelings are lively and ardent upon all subjects, from some cause entirely unconnected with the subjects themselves. And there are times when our feelings are depressed upon all subjects, without any apparent reason in the circumstances themselves in which we are placed. In such cases it is often found that these different states of feeling arise from different states of health. But at such times our feelings upon the subject of religion, as well as upon other subjects, will be affected by the state of our bodily health. Every thing there as well as elsewhere, will look dark and gloomy, or bright and joyful in correspondence with our state of health, which affects our feelings upon other subjects.

We perceive therefore that though our feelings may not be so lively and ardent as are the feelings of those with whom we converse, there may be a cause for this difference entirely independent of our religious condition. We may differ from them in natural temperament or may have been in different states of health, or may have been placed in different situations. While they have been in scenes of religious excitement, we may

have been by ourselves, while they have been conversing with each other upon their feelings, we may have been communing with our hearts, searching the scriptures, and comparing the one with the other. Our exercises, though different, may have been as profitable as theirs. If our feelings have been less lively and ardent than theirs, they may have been equally deep, powerful and lasting.

If confirmation be needed of the truth of the principle stated, we might refer to the journals and diaries of the pious and devout which have been given to the public. There we should find evident marks of the influence of individual peculiarity of temperament, of diversity in outward circumstances, and bodily health upon the character of religious feelings. We might refer to the scriptures where we should find, in the different religious characters of Peter and of John, evident marks of the influence of individual peculiarity of temperament. Let it then ever be remembered, as a general principle, that religious feelings are but the natural feelings of the man directed to the subject of religion, and that they consequently vary with all the varieties of individual temperament and of outward circumstances, which cause variation of feeling upon other subjects.

2d. The second general principle to be noticed is this; *That the true test of the strength and value of our feelings upon all subjects, consists not in the vividness of emotion, but in the amount of influence exerted over the conduct.*

There are those who manifest for a time great strength of feeling. But the whole strength of their feelings seems to evaporate in the ebullition of the moment. They really feel, and feel deeply, but it is all mere feel-

ing, and passes away before any permanent effect is produced upon the conduct. There are others, who seem, if we judge from their liveliness of emotion, to feel but little. But, if we judge by the influence exerted over the conduct, we shall conclude, that the feelings of these same individuals, though they may operate in silence and in calmness, do operate powerfully. The ardent Peter could say, "though I die with thee yet will I not deny thee." And he undoubtedly spoke in all sincerity and honesty, as well as with much warmth of feeling. But it was mere feeling, momentary impulse, and, before producing any permanent effect upon the conduct, gave place to another state of feeling equally as strong but of an opposite character. We have undoubtedly noticed a difference among those we call our friends. There are these, who make many professions and no doubt sincere professions of strong attachment. They undoubtedly feel deeply. But their feelings evaporate in emotion. They are not led by their feelings to endure trials, to perform labors, to make sacrifices for the good of their friends. And then there are others, who seem cold and phlegmatic, who manifest no great joy at meeting with their friends, no great grief at parting with them. But, at the same time, no sacrifice is too great to be made, no fatigue too great to be endured, no labor too arduous to be performed by them for the good of their friends. But what friendship is to be regarded as the most valuable? That which consists almost entirely in professions of strong attachment, sincere though they may be, or that in which proof of attachment is given in labors performed and sacrifices made for our good? Most surely the latter is the more valuable of the two.

It will be perceived therefore that the proper inquiry in regard to our feelings upon subjects not connected with religion, if we would know their true value, is, not how ardent and lively may have been our emotions, not how strongly we may at times have felt, but what have our feelings led us to do or to endure in the cause in which they have been enlisted.

It is the same in regard to religious feelings. There are those, whose feelings are easily and strongly excited upon the subject. As they read the accounts of our Saviour's sufferings and death, as by themselves they meditate upon their past sinfulness and ingratitude, or as they mingle in scenes of religious excitement, they are strongly moved. There is much vividness of emotion. But as the scenes change and they enter upon the ordinary duties of life, their religious feelings vanish and leave no perceptible trace behind. They vanish without having produced any permanent effect upon the character, without exercising any powerful influence upon the conduct. They are as worldly and as irreligious as before. There are others, who in the same scenes and circumstances are not excited. They are calm. There is no agitation. There is but little vividness of emotion — and, when compared with some around them, they might be pronounced altogether indifferent. But yet there is an influence exerted, an effect produced. The character is affected, the conduct is subjected to religious principles, and labors are undertaken and sacrifices are made in the cause, in which the heart has become interested. But whose religious feelings are to be regarded as of the most real value? — his who speaks strongly and truly, it may be, if

his love to God, or his, who, though he seldom speak of his feelings, is led by them to a life of unreserved obedience. Whose feelings are the most valuable?— his, who tells of his great sorrow from sin, while yet he does not forsake it, or his, whose feelings lead him to labor in silence to overcome sinful habits, and to cherish virtuous desires and holy affections? Most surely the latter. Let then our inquiry in regard to the intensity of our religious feelings be, not so much how we have felt, as how have our feelings led us to act. And let it ever be impressed upon our minds, as a general principle, that the true test of the value of our feelings upon all subjects is not the vividness of emotion but the amount of influence.

The practical inferences to be drawn from these two general principles are these. Are we in doubt in regard to the intensity of our religious feelings? We should be led by our doubts to study well our own characters, our peculiarities of temperament, to know what are our feelings upon other subjects, to know what are the circumstances in which we are placed, and what we may expect as the natural influence of those circumstances upon our feelings, to know what is the peculiar state of our health and how that will affect our feelings. Thus, we perceive that, in the first place, our doubts should lead us to a most intimate acquaintance with ourselves in all parts of our character, and to a most careful examination of all external circumstances which can possibly have a bearing upon our feelings.

In the second place, we should inquire carefully for the results, the permanent effects of our feelings upon

our conduct. If our feelings upon the subject of religion are leading us to faithful endeavors to forsake and avoid all known sin, and to practice all known duty, to understand all revealed truth, and to cherish at all times a truly christian spirit,—if they are leading us to strive to extend the influence of religious principles over all our every day conduct,—if they lead to a more deep and habitual reverence for the character of God, to stronger love for the Saviour, and to more kindness to our fellow-men,—if such be the influence our religious feelings are exerting over us, we may rest assured that they are sufficiently intense to be acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

III. In the third place; Doubts often arise in regard to the *constancy* of religious feelings. Here is one who is sincerely endeavoring to lead a christian life. And he is one, who at times, as for example when meditating upon religious truth or engaged in religious exercises, feels deeply upon the subject of religion. But he complains that, at other times, his feelings are cold and dead, that, when engaged in his ordinary occupations he is not conscious of deep love to God, of ardent religious feeling, that, at such times, his thoughts are wholly devoted to the particular business that may be in hand. He fears, therefore, that his occasional ardor of feeling may be only the result of temporary excitement, and may not entitle him to a well-grounded hope. He doubts and hesitates, and in this state of mind enjoys no happiness and makes no improvement. The doubts which arise on this subject also, are to be removed by the application of one or two general principles, together with the practical inferences to be drawn from them.

1st. The first principle to be noticed is this, *that we may be acting under the influence of strong feelings, without being conscious of the strength of our feelings.*

The ground on which this principle rests is perfectly plain. We are not conscious of the strength of our feelings, unless the question as to their strength or weakness be the subject to which our attention is directed, or there be some circumstances which cause us to think of the object of our affections. But if, under the influence of strong feelings, we are led to engage earnestly in duty, the mind is not employed in asking the question whether our feelings are lively and ardent, or cold and dead, and there may be no circumstance to cause us to fear the loss of the object of our affections, or to lead us to think directly about it. Our minds may be wholly employed in devising and putting into execution the best plans for performing the duty in which we are engaged. While therefore we are thus earnestly engaged in duty, although led to engage in it by strong feelings, we shall not be conscious of the strength of our feelings. Here, for example, is a child. He leaves the paternal roof for a distant school. He is strongly attached to his parents, and earnestly desirous of doing what may be well pleasing in their sight. He is aware that he can do nothing which will gratify them so highly as to attend faithfully to his studies, and to make rapid improvement. This he resolves to do. When he makes this resolve, it will be perceived, he is influenced by a proper feeling of love for his parents, and he is himself conscious of strong love. But he goes forth to engage in his studies under the influence of his resolution. And now the whole energies of his mind are devoted to his studies. Suppose he meets

with difficulty. He is obliged to task his powers to the utmost, and to shut every thing else from his mind or he will fail of overcoming the difficulty. He does therefore bend all his efforts; and direct all his thoughts to this object. While thus engaged he will not be conscious of strong love for his parents. He may say at the close of his efforts, this day has passed, and I have not even thought of my parents or felt the slightest degree of love for them. And yet the very intensity of the efforts which he put forth was caused by the strength of his love. There are moments, perhaps, when the lad is strongly tempted to give up in despair. But then the thought of his parents, of his own desire and resolution to please them revives in his mind and arouses him to further exertions, and then he is conscious of the strength of his love.

Let me apply this illustration. We are placed in this world at school, as it were, in a state of discipline and probation. We enjoy here the means and opportunities of fitting ourselves for heaven. We are placed here by our Heavenly Father in infinite goodness and for our best improvement. When we reflect upon the goodness of God and upon the obligations we are under to him, we earnestly desire to do, while here, what is well pleasing in his sight. As we are taught that there is no way in which we can please him but by obeying his commands, by becoming virtuous and holy, we resolve that we will strive to become so. Then we shall be conscious of feelings of love to God. But, when we remember that it is a part of christian virtue to be diligent in business, to labor for those of our own household, we shall go forth and engages in the active duties, the ordinary transactions

of life. While thus engaged, our minds will, and, in many cases, ought to be devoted to our lawful callings. Suppose that we meet with losses which so embarrass our circumstances that we scarcely know how to extricate ourselves. All the powers of our minds and all the energies of our souls will be tasked and employed in devising means to repair our broken fortunes and to provide things honest in the sight of all men. At such times we shall not be conscious of a deep love to God, or of a strong sense of duty, for we shall not be thinking of these things. Our thoughts will be employed upon the best means of extricating ourselves from our embarrassments. There may be times when we shall be tempted to resort to fraud. Then the thought of our God, of our obligations, our duties, our former desires and resolutions, may nerve us to withstand, and then of course we shall be conscious of our love, of strong religious feelings.

We perceive then that we may be under the influence of strong religious feelings, even though we are not at every moment conscious of the strength of our feelings. And this principle reaches the case. For the complaint is, not that the individual has not thought of God, has not been conscious of love to him and of a strong desire to receive his approving smiles, when engaged in religious inquiries, exercises or meditations, it is, that the mind is not wholly engaged in thinking of God, even when employed in the discharge of ordinary duty. Let this principle then be impressed upon our minds and applied to the removal of our doubts.

2d. Another principle intimately connected with the former is this, — *That the general state of the heart may be right, when there is no outward indication of its con-*

dition because the mind is engrossed in intellectual pursuits, or involved in the perplexities of business, or the engagements and duties of social life. We shall best understand this principle from an illustration. Here are two boys, of entirely different characters, as regards their affections and dispositions. The one is docile, humble, submissive, obedient, kind and affectionate. The other is the reverse of all this. They are together, engaged in the same boyish sport. As we look upon them in their play we can discover no difference of character. The minds of both are intensely devoted to the same object. But we speak to them, and make known a command from their teacher, requiring them to leave their play and repair to their studies. The one obeys with cheerfulness and alacrity. The other is sullen, murmurs at the severity of the command, and is perhaps at last disobedient. It will be perceived, from this illustration, that the general character of the feelings and affections may be right, and there will be no indication of it while the mind is employed upon other and indifferent pursuits. These two boys, the moment before we spake to them, exhibited no marks of difference. There was perhaps no difference in the particular part of their character then manifested,—their playfulness. They probably felt alike for they were both conscious only of a feeling of deep interest in their play. They were not conscious, the one of deep love for his teacher, and the other of perfect indifference, or settled dislike. But our speaking to them placed them in different circumstances and caused a new development of their peculiar characters, and in this development, they differed much from each other.

Let us apply this illustration. Here are two individuals engaged in business. From our observation we can discover no essential difference in their characters. They alike seem to be fair and honorable in their dealings, and wholly devoted to their respective pursuits. Their conversation upon the transactions of business, or upon the passing news of the day, is nearly alike. And yet in their religious feelings they are entirely different. The one is influenced by a regard for the opinions of his fellow-men, for his reputation and success, the other is influenced by religious considerations and motives. Suppose we speak to them of God and the Saviour, of holiness and heavenly happiness, of religious truth and christian duty. The one listens with reverence and manifests an interest in what we say. The other turns away with a sneer, or shows, by the manner in which he listens, that he feels himself under the restraints of politeness. Thus it will be perceived that the general states of their affections upon this subject were different, and that this difference was indicated as soon as the subject was brought to mind. The heart of the one was right with God, while that of the other was not. While other subjects were presented to the mind there was no apparent difference. Nor were the individuals themselves conscious of the peculiar states of their affections.

Or suppose these two individuals to be visited by the same afflictive dispensation of Providence, by the loss of their property. The one will submit in resignation and cheerfulness, as to a dispensation ordered in wisdom and love. The other will murmur and repine. If called to enjoy the same prosperity, the one will be truly thankful to the Giver of all, and will endeavor to manifest his

gratitude by a right use of the gifts bestowed. The other will be filled with pride and vanity, as though by his own skill he had secured prosperity. In this way it is, by circumstances which reach the heart, and lay open its hidden workings, that the peculiar state of the affections is discovered. And this principle too reaches the case. The doubting individual may say I am driven with business. From early morn until late at night my attention is directed to worldly occupations, and I cannot see that I differ from others who do not profess to be interested in the subject of religion. But the difference is not so much in the kind of pursuit as in the manner of pursuing. The christian may engage in all lawful pursuits by which his own interest can be advanced, without injury to those of his neighbor. And while his attention is directed to his business, there may be nothing to indicate even to his own mind the state of his affections. But if he will watch, there will be frequent circumstances which will discover to him the true state of his heart. His attention to religious exercises and duties will not be omitted, even though pressed by the cares and duties of life. And then, too, he will be tempted to defraud. He will receive blessings from the hand of God or will be visited with affliction. The manner in which he is affected by these circumstances, will show to him that the general state of his feelings may be right, although there may be no outward indication of this when the mind is engaged in the pursuits of literature, involved in the perplexities of business, or the engagements and duties of social life.

The practical inference to be drawn from these two principles is of the utmost importance. If we are in doubt in regard to the constancy of our religious feelings,

because we are not conscious of lively religious emotions, when engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, we should not suffer ourselves to be discouraged by dwelling too long upon our doubts. We should examine ourselves, to learn by what feelings and motives we have been induced to engage in the pursuits to which our attention is directed. Do we engage in them from a sense of duty, a regard to the will of our God, and are we governed in our prosecution of these pursuits by a sense of obligation and accountability to him?

We should be led in the second place by our doubts to inquire into the general character of our feelings, as evinced by the manner in which we are affected by the various circumstances of life. What are our feelings when the name of God is profanely uttered in our hearing? What are our feelings when we listen to conversation upon the character and perfections of God, the labors and sufferings of Christ? If, upon examination, we find that in our ordinary occupations we are engaged in what we regard as duty, that we are restrained in seasons of temptation by the thought of God and our accountability, that in prosperity we are grateful to him as the giver, and in seasons of adversity submit in cheerful resignation as to a dispensation which is wisely and mercifully ordered, that we are so much interested in religious subjects, that our minds on every little respite from the perplexities of business and care revert to religious meditations as a pleasure, if such be the indications of our general state of feelings, we shall be entitled, it would seem, to a well grounded hope.

We have thus noticed the doubts most commonly expressed upon the subject of religious feelings, and have

stated certain general principles, by the right understanding and proper application of which, these doubts may, as we think, be removed. We have feared that there are two practical errors abroad in the community in regard to religious feelings. There are some, who regard these as the essentials of religion, and in their inquiries, ask only what is the state of the feelings. And this class too mistake physical proneness to excitement for real tenderness of religious feelings. Religious feelings are not the essentials of religion, but they are serviceable handmaids. They aid in promoting religious enjoyment, and strengthening religious principle, and in urging onward religious improvement. We value them highly, we would gladly learn their true nature and the principles by which they are to be estimated.

We regard religious feelings not as special communications from the spirit of God to the spirit of man but as a part of the human soul as originally created, made free by the influence of religion. We expect to see them vary with every variety of individual temperament, and of outward circumstance, and we hope to approximate to a perfect acquaintance with their true nature and peculiar operations, by a careful observation of the true nature and usual manifestations of our feelings upon other subjects.

1st Series. No. 92.

PIETY AND MORALITY

THEIR

MUTUAL IMPORTANCE

AS ELEMENTS OF

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

BY GEORGE WHITNEY.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

FEBRUARY, 1835.

Price 3 *Cents.*

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL STREET.

PIETY AND MORALITY.

When the lawyer quoted from the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself," — the Saviour replied, "Thou hast answered right; this do and thou shalt live." These words furnish me with a starting point, and with authority for my present discussion. They refer with sufficient distinctness to two important elements of character, with regard to which the best way is to treat of them in connexion with each other. They are *morality* and *piety*. On these two subjects, the Christian world, at large, are generally divided into two opposing parties; and I know of no better course, than to enter upon the view I propose at present to take of them, by a brief statement of their conflicting, and, if I am not mistaken, equally erroneous notions.

But, before taking a step, let us first understand our terms: — Morality then, as I take it, has chief reference to our social duties, confirmed indeed, and sanctioned by the will of God, — while piety is in principle a compound of veneration and love of the Supreme Being, and in practice the exercise and enjoyment of these affections. Bearing these definitions in mind, we shall be more likely to have clear conceptions of what we are dis-

coursing about. It may not be irrelevant to add, likewise, that the purest morality is drawn from the Christian Scriptures; and that the most exalted piety first drew its breath of life from Jesus the Saviour.

Now, then, to commence with one of the prevailing notions, — there are those, thinking themselves, and thought by others to be religious men, good servants of order and peace, and good servants of God, who are willing to rest entirely upon morality, who think this is all that is required and all that is necessary. Their purposes and motives are right. It would be wrong to accuse them of irreligion, of trying to shake off the restraints of duty, of a design to be superficial in their obedience, or of a wish to do one jot or tittle less than God requires them to do. They think that morality includes every thing; — that when you have said that, you have said all that is to be said; for they think that the truly moral man is the safe man, — the man, who will do every thing you call him to do, just as it ought to be done; that he is the one to be trusted in responsible offices, and the one to go forward and be followed in the way of example. What would you have, they ask, in your communities and families, if not good morals? How can you do without this? how can you go beyond it? Are not honesty and veracity, fairness, charity, sobriety and temperance, acceptable to God? In this way, you perceive, they make morality religion, — the fulfilling of God's laws, the practice of Christianity, — the sum and the substance of duty.

I shall not stop at present, to point out what strikes me as the mistake and imperfection, which are at the bottom of this view, for they will appear, I trust, as I proceed.

On the other hand, there are those who count, or who profess to count all this nothing; who say that the moral character is well enough, but that it is not the main thing,— the necessary thing,— the matter indispensable, what the Scriptures pronounce "the one thing needful." — Their view is, — and so far as this is concerned, we may just pause to observe, it is a perfectly correct one,— that there must be something to control and support good morals; that human nature needs a greater strength, a surer rock upon which to rest, than simply the consciousness of doing right in the social relations. They believe that he, who made us in so much wisdom, and provides for us with so much care, and continues to be gracious in so much mercy, demands, like any earthly parent, the hearts and confidence of his children; and that in this, in fine, in the deep fountains of an inexhaustible piety, are the waters of life, and the cordial and support of our tried, tempted, and oftentimes desponding souls. Looking, perhaps, too steadily at this part of the character, and dwelling upon it too exclusively, they fall into the opposite extreme of unduly exalting piety, as those I have just named are apt to overrate morals. In consequence of this, they are sometimes led to speak unadvisedly and inconsiderately, in too strong and extravagant terms, and to pronounce the moral man as no better than the irreligious man, because still deficient in this great requisite of Christian character. In the same way, with some of this harshness worn off, we may hear them, now and then, calling loudly for something more than a good life, and speaking of this man or that man as a good moral man, an upright man, an exemplary man, a worthy man—but not a *pious* man; and thus they leave

the impression,—not that I suppose they can intend it,—but still they leave the impression that good morals are of no great importance, and that piety is exclusively the indispensable and all important thing.

I have said, and I believe, that both of these views are somewhat wrong,—I now add that, as there are some mistake and some extravagance about both, so also there is much truth at the bottom of each. The best way in this, as in every other case, is to sift out the error and retain and profit by what is true.

I proceed, therefore, by asking,— Christianity and all God's instructions, the abundance of moral and religious means, by which we are every where surrounded, what are they for? They are aiming to develope the human character, and by bringing all man's powers, and his whole nature to their proper perfection, to ensure to him the happiness he was born to enjoy. The true Christian, the truly religious man, indeed the perfect man, so far as such a character can be attained, is he whose powers and nature have become thus equally developed and balanced; and there can be no such character without this development. If you take your child at an early age, and fetter a certain number of his limbs, cramp and bind his muscles in any part, so that they may not have their healthy exercise and growth,—it would be madness in you to look, at a suitable age, for the perfection and finished proportion of limb he would, by proper care, attention and training, otherwise have exhibited. Yes, but shall we be slow to perceive and to acknowledge that the inward character,—the Christian and religious life does not differ, when we come to the principle of the thing, one hair's breadth from this? When you talk of

a model of character, and speak of morals as the only thing necessary; when you assert that the moral man is what you want, that others may extol piety and enjoy it, morality is enough for you, you are not aware what an imperfect estimate you are making. You might with just as much propriety, and perhaps a great deal more, certainly with as much propriety, speak of an able-bodied man, who had lost an arm, as if one arm could effect precisely as much,—be as serviceable and convenient as two. You might as well speak of a perfect tree, when it has only roots and branches, and will not put forth a blossom or a leaf. The man is deformed and imperfect, who loses the possession or the use of any one of those sinews, limbs or organs with which God in his perfection has fashioned him; and that which you call a tree, is not a tree, if, so be, that it is bereft of a portion of that which constitutes, I had almost said, its perfection and form, at least its finish and glory. If its leaves have not and will not put forth, it is no longer a perfect tree, but a bare and impotent trunk. And just so the moral man, without piety, is to him who will discriminate and analyse character, who knows what forms a religious or a perfect being; for, as we use the terms, these two are identical,—just as imperfect, and just as deformed as this maimed man or this leafless tree.

Then, again, to resume the other extreme of this subject,—he who denounces morality, the majesty and the practice of virtue, denounces a holy thing; he strikes at the very heart of all order, happiness and peace. Would any one say that the culture and exercise of honesty, integrity, truth, fairness, and so on through the long, almost unending catalogue of *social* duties, are of no importance?

Then let him not say that morality is nothing, for these he must admit, are morality. Would any one maintain that justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude,— those traits of which the ancients became so enamoured, that they stamped them with the name of the cardinal virtues, — and through all succeeding times that stamp hath never worn away ; that these were not as effectual towards the welfare of a community, the happiness and improvement of individuals as devotion, self-abasement and penitence? Then let him cease to speak sneeringly of his neighbor, calling him a good moral man, but nothing else. For he, who, in this world of many temptations and many sins, has attained to any thing like even a tolerably pure morality,— though he may not have attained to every thing, has secured, nevertheless, no worthless thing. Would any one assert that what Christ preached and urged upon us was nothing, not worth valuing or practising? Then let him not rail at morality; for, if he will but read over again some of his discourses, say, for instance, since that is so prominent, the one upon the Mount, he will find that sometimes even morality became the burden of his preaching. Indeed, for why waste more words? You may as well slip from your watch, a multitude of its springs and wheels, and say that they are nothing, mere springs and wheels, because the main moving power is still left untouched, as to say, that the moral virtues are nothing, that they can be dispensed with, or for one instant undervalued.

No, there is no such thing in the religious or Christian life, — there is no such thing as this dispensation of the moral virtues in the fulness of the measure of the stature of a perfect man ; whether as the child of God taught by

reason and nature, or the disciple of his ever blessed son. The moral man is at best, but imperfect and but half armed with the panoply of his power, who derides piety or who thinks, from whatever motive, that his morality is all that he needs. And to speak of a pious man even with the intimation of a reproach upon morals is, if possible, yet more short-sighted still, and might almost be construed into a contradiction in terms; for he, who truly venerates and loves his Maker, must, if not by necessity, yet in all consistency and by sympathy, venerate and love also all that he approves, and find the purest pleasures of his life in the practice of virtue.

Therefore, the amount of my doctrine,— the conclusion of the whole matter is, that morality and piety are both indispensable elements in the perfection of the human character; just as indispensable, to return again to my simile, as the two arms of a man are to the perfection of his physical frame; just as indispensable, whether we look for strength and happiness, or hope to meet successfully the duties, adversities and trials of life, or the closing hour of death without trembling or alarm.

It will now be proper for me to illustrate and enforce this doctrine.

Let me speak, first, then, of piety dwelling alone with its sunlight of peace in the human breast, but hemmed in by a dark horizon, because of the outward life, inimical as it is to the will and law of God. Strange as this case may seem, it must be admitted to have had and still to have, now and then, a place among the irregular phenomena of the human character. Let us wander back, for a moment, among the cloisters of the ancient abbeys, in the sacred places of the monasteries, hallowed by religious

associations; let us look at the cowled monks, bowing, morning and evening, in holy mass; having bestowed the freshness of youth on sacred themes, and waiting in age at the altar, — thus giving a whole life's service to God and religion. You may find them warmed by a deep piety, venerating and loving the matchless perfections of the Infinite One: the altar of the inner-temple kindled by living and celestial fire. As we turn to the licentiousness that polluted their consecrated abodes, as we look at the dishonesty with which they drew from toiling and suffering humanity its meagre pittance, to cast into their crowded coffers,— as we ponder over the duplicity,— the low cunning,— the base arts by which they were ready to stoop to any measures to gratify selfishness and sordid interest, and aspiring ambition, we need hardly ask what was wanting to have caused the precious benedictions, that were laid upon their heads by the unsuspicious multitude on earth, to be confirmed above by Him, to whom all hearts are ever open as the day. There was a lamentable want among these pious men, — for pious certainly they were, — there was a lamentable want of the plainest moral virtues. The main spring of action was in itself well fashioned. Nothing could be better for their spheres and fields of exertion than was the piety, which was fixed at the soul, as if to be within them a controlling and governing power. But all its control and government were lost. They severed the heart from the life. There was no connecting link between the pious sentiment and the extensive mechanism of the outer man. By some inexplicable self-deception, — some almost incredible abuse or perversion of the mental or moral powers, these patriarchs of piety saw not or felt not the contradiction

between their base morality and their veneration and love of the Deity. They saw not or felt not how disorderly the life was running on in its course, through the want of one connecting bond between it and the well balanced power that was in motion within.

So, too, the cell of the hermit told often the same incongruous tale, — a tale of devout piety, — and an immoral, even a profligate life. The same thing may occur now among the scenes of human frailty on the broad high-way of earthly trial and mortal imperfections. Hypocrites, doubtless, there are, who boldly assume to wear the name of pious ones, knowing nothing of their divine spirit. Let them pass. But whence and how happens it that yonder merchant, as he walks among his fellow-tradesmen, finds no eye to greet him cordially, no hand to lead him aside in confidence, no tongue whispering to him of new projects over the sea, while the proud ship ready to spread her sails, is washing her sides in the bay? Among the loved ones at home, there are many who know of the piety that fills and warms his breast. He is scrupulous to offer the devout prayer by the morning and evening hearth. He talks to his children of God,— leads them to reverence his name and adore his goodness. Not more constant in his rising is the glorious sun than is he in his attendance on every religious institution. Whence then and how happens it that his name has not more honor in the busy mart? It is plain enough whence and how it is. His piety is a solitary, secluded, isolated thing. He keeps his active life away from it; and from the want of communion with each other, that active life is a field of thorns and briars. His moral capacities are running to waste. Instead of the social virtues he dis-

plays dishonesty — he overreaches in his bargains,— he takes unworthy advantage,— he is growing rich at other people's cost. So, therefore, is he shunned and despised. Men make a mockery of his reputed piety. It becomes their by-word for every immoral thing. Let him but join a life of scrupulous and pure morality to the piety that makes him dear as he is at home, and all just praise and honor will be his in the world ; he may look with a steadfast hope for the crown of a faithful servant, as his future and better inheritance.

Let me farther illustrate and enforce my doctrine, in the second place, by showing the insufficiency of morality alone, as well as the importance of piety also ; and let me do it in two particulars. First, as to confidence, security, and strength in the ordinary duties of life. Go out, then, into the busy mazes of this world, and bring in the moral man who, not according to your accusation, but by his own willing confession, has no piety. The world has such men to offer. Faithful has he been at the bank, or any other dangerous post, when amidst pressing emergencies at home, he has counted over the hundreds of thousands and left them, as his obligation demanded, unpolluted by the touch of dishonest fingers. No word of falsehood in his dealings has passed from his tongue to return again, at the bar of serious reflection, biting like a serpent and stinging like an adder ; never yet, in the convivial meeting, has he stepped beyond the bounds of moderation, — never yet taken advantage of another's ignorance, or betrayed his confidence, or sought by slanderous lips to reap revenge for a past injury, or raise himself on the ruins of his fallen reputation. None of this has, as yet, gathered like a tarnishing breath over the lustre of his

honored name. The world calls him, and he calls himself, a moral man. He is emphatically one of sterling morality. Yet is he not, with it all, sufficient for life's perilous duties. He is not the strong man others think him; they count for him more weapons than he wears at his side. He is not the strong man he wishes himself to be. Else why is it that he feels and feels so acutely, from time to time, as if there were about him such vulnerable points, — very many to him, though unseen by the multitude who utter his name on the thronged exchange as one to be proud of, and to be ranked high in the various council chambers and places of confidence in the community? Else why is it that he is so pained with misgivings, when he looks abroad at the world's temptations, and at home at his own weakness, lest the armor he has put on, good as it is, were not enough? Why do his weapons look to him so few, and those few so frail? He is not the strong one he passes for. Else why is it that, looking to the sad delinquencies in the moral character, passing like shifting scenes before us, even he and such as he, in most evil hours are made such wonderful shipwreck of, betraying others' confidence, proving false to their well earned fame? The answer is, as I have before asserted, because he is but half armed, —half armed with the power that may be borrowed from Heaven for every hazardous hour and every struggle on the wide battle field of the earth. The answer is simple but all sufficient, *he wants piety*. He wants piety to inspire him with a strength that may never break in the season of peril, but give him the necessary confidence and power to be faithful in every pressing and difficult duty. He wants the deep conviction which, as yet, he has not experienced,

which he says that he has not and knows full well that he has not, the conviction that walk where he will in his duty, he is doing the service of the Most High God, and if true to his powers will by him be sustained therein. He is suffering for the cheering love of the Father's character, and so therefore, is he disheartened and afraid lest he be charmed by the tempter. He is unprotected by the sense of his everlasting presence, — his eye slumbering not nor sleeping, watching by his side in every act, while the darkness or the thick walls, or distance, shut out from him the inspection of men; and so, therefore, is he disturbed when he turns the keys of his vault, as if evil spirits were not far off lurking in ambush to cast before him the baits of dishonesty and fraud. He bears not with him the remembrance of the smiles and favor of God upon every virtuous act, more cheering far than the smile of the dearest earthly friend. Wherever he may go, or in whatsoever work he may be engaged, a veneration and love of God, the pleasures of his service, these he knows not of, these he conceives not of. While he is on the earth he is not in the presence of the Father as a deep piety will place him, with the countless and viewless host,— the attendant and ministering spirits that are round about him giving him invincible strength for every duty, and firmness immovable as the mountains for every moment of assault.

And then, secondly, as to the sorrows and disappointments of life. Let us look again for another like him, with whom we have just been conversant; one whose reputation, also, among his fellow-men, as you may find, is without a spot. He is unimpeachably honest, and would as soon cut off his right hand as defraud one of a farthing, whether in his presence or out of it. He

is charitable, almost to a fault; temperate even to abstemiousness; so devoted to truth, as well nigh to injure himself in its service; at any time, strange as it may sound to some, yet, at any time more willing a great deal to suffer himself than to make another human being suffer. Now there are times amidst life's trials and woes, when such a man as this too is unhappy. His friends and acquaintances see it: he knows it himself. If his life were at stake, and the accounting for it were to save it, he cannot divine its cause. He cannot conceive why it is, that a man, who is as scrupulous as he feels sure he himself is, to do always what is just and right, should for all that be sometimes so miserable. What is the reason if morality is all that a man needs in this world? He has it in its perfection and unrivalled beauty. Brethren, you may search the catalogue over and over again, the conclusion will be the same. The answer is, *he wants piety*, — a trust in an all-seeing Being, — the acknowledgment and the love of his Maker, — together with the delightful and all-inspiring conviction, that as his portion is to be faithful to his opportunities and his lot, so all his Maker's government must be infinitely perfect and unerringly right. He is a purely moral man, and as far as he goes, faultless, and as far he goes, happy. But the capacities of his exalted nature are but half developed; and in a world, where so much is to be done, and so many trials to be borne, where the development of all his powers is needed, he drags along in his course like an unfinished machine. Try him on the score of strength and repose, and in the sick chamber, where God has laid upon him his heavy hand, you find him fretful and uneasy, and really believing something must be wrong. Strip him of

his property and possessions and he weeps like a child, for he thinks everything is gone, and what is worse, gone unrighteously. Call him to bury his family, his wife and children, and dearest earthly hopes in the dust, — as in this changing world many a smitten heart must, — and he becomes wretched. Let him be told that the solemn hour of his own dissolution is at hand, and his hopes wither away like the burnt leaves; he then breaks down like the fabric the artificer has but feebly supported, and proves to us, if proof were wanting, how impotent a man is to bear up under life's trials, without an unshaken trust in an almighty God.

I anticipate the objections, which may be urged against what I have said. I seem to hear them on every side. Does any one ask, almost in a tone of derision, if such are the discoveries of later days? if anything has been found at length, to make sickness any the less the evil it is? to make a man happy in disappointment, disease, pining pain or approaching death? I answer, yes; piety will do it; it has done it; it may do it again. But it is no new discovery; it has done all this ever since man and the world were made. And for this, do you ask, is human nature to be altered, and its blessed sympathies and affections to be scorched into insensibility? No, but it is to be armed, like a sentry tower, with the chosen weapons and the guardian power of a living, ever-abiding, all-sufficient piety. It is this which fills history with the signal examples of enduring virtue and a calm triumph over outward inflictions, bodily pain and mental anguish, imprisonment, torture and death. It is this, which, with some few exceptions perhaps, of a physical strength of nerve or an innate stubbornness, it is this, I

say, which has left the memorable records of the martyr, walking to the scaffold with a firm step, an unmoved countenance and a fearless heart. It is this, and in most cases nothing but this, which strengthens the father, after all his efforts of fidelity, to bow in submission to the higher ordination which blasts every earthly, present hope, and visits his grey hairs with a son perverted and lost. And it is this, and nothing but this, which braces up the mother, with a tearless eye and a hope that is beyond this world, even in Heaven, to give back her child, with all its pure affections and opening powers, to the invisible disposal of Him who gave it at the first.

I rejoice to believe that there is much more of this genuine piety in the world than we are apt to imagine, or than we are oftentimes ready to allow. The religious principle, or, I should rather say, the religious capacity is indeed seated, as I firmly believe, in all hearts; but a man may be possessed of this principle or this capacity and be very far from the character or the attainments of piety, very far from loving the Lord his God with all his soul and strength and mind, and from those exercises, which this love begets; precisely as the indolent scholar may have the capacity but none of the acquisitions of learning. The murderer may have the religious capacity in him, and at the same time be anything but a pious man. Nevertheless, there are pious spirits the world knows nothing of and never suspects, who never mention their piety, nor display it to the outward eye. How can we know or tell of the secrets of others' hearts? how judge of those, who never reveal themselves? They may pass only for moral men; but where we little think, where God only sees, behind their morality, there

1st Series. No. 93.

THE

PROMISE OF JESUS

TO

THE PURE IN HEART.

BY F. W. P. GREENWOOD.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

March, 1835.

Price 2 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL STREET.

PROMISE OF JESUS, &c.

Let us suppose, that among the multitudes of people who covered the mountain on that day, when Jesus declared from its height the great principles of his religion and kingdom, there were some, who not being able to hear the whole of his discourse, only caught these words of one of the beatitudes, — "for they shall see God."

See God! they might exclaim; — see that mighty Being who created the heavens and all the host of them by the word of his mouth; who laid the foundations of the earth; who spake, and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast; — see Him, the Ancient of Days, the Rock of Ages, — Him, the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*, — the infinite Maker, Father, Judge! Is it not past belief? Can any of mortal race see God? Can it be true?

Have we not seen the wonders which he doeth? others might have replied. He is the Son of God; he is the Word of God; what he hath said must be true.

But for whom is the promise intended? We heard him say, "they shall see God." Who are they, the favored, the distinguished, the blessed, who are to enjoy the unspeakable privilege of seeing God? It cannot be that to us, poor, uncelebrated and unknown as we are,

dust and ashes, who should hardly take it upon us to speak to God; it cannot be that to us the honor is to be granted of seeing him. We can have no part in that promise. It must be intended for the great and dignified; for those who exercise authority; for the representatives of the Divine Majesty on earth; for those to whom the word came of old, "I said ye are Gods!" It must be to such as these, and not to us, that the assurance is given.

The Teacher did not say so, again might it have been replied. He said nothing of nobility or rule. He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for *they* shall see God."

Yes, those were the words, the holy words. It was not to address the great and powerful, with any separate speech, that the lowly Jesus went up into that mountain, while his lowly disciples gathered round him. It was not the affluent and the honorable, over whom the Messiah's blessings were pronounced, and who were welcomed into his long expected kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. It was the poor, the mourners, the meek, the merciful, the peace-makers, and the persecuted, who were comforted by his benedictions, and it was the pure in heart, who were assured that they should see God. It is to them, therefore, to the pure in heart, of any and every external condition, that the promise belongs. Whether they be rich or poor, learned or unlearned, high or low, — so that they are pure in heart, they shall see God.

But why is the promise addressed to them? Why shall the pure in heart enjoy the privilege of seeing God? Because under the gospel dispensation, they are recognised as the greatest and worthiest, and are entitled to the highest reward. Because all the means and motives resented to man in the Gospel, are directed to the puri-

fication of his heart. Because the internal and not the external condition, is the great object of all gospel appliances. Because out of the heart are the issues of life; and if the heart is pure, those issues, those streams and consequences which make up the life of man, will also be pure, clear and refreshing. If we reflect, that it was to make the human heart pure, that the Father sent his Son into the world, and gave him power to heal diseases, and raise the dead, and forgive sins; if we reflect, that it was to make the human heart pure, that the Son taught, labored, suffered and died; we shall perceive at once that they who possess a pure heart, must be heirs of the most precious promises of the Gospel, and the richest gifts which its author bestows.

There is little said in the christian scriptures about the great ones of the earth; absolutely nothing in the way of encouragement, or approbation, or flattery. Indifference only is observed, throughout their contents, toward those titles and distinctions which so dazzle the poor idolaters whose handicraft they are; while all care is devoted to the heart, the naked, unadorned, simple, human heart. All their instructions are intended for that; all their observation is reserved for that. They teach that all true nobility, all real wealth, must exist in it, and flow out from it; that it is the fountain of honor, and the criterion of greatness. He therefore, who has answered the end of christianity by purifying his heart, and of course the life whose issues are out of it, stands up the accredited work of the new creation of Christ, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, endowed with all privileges, and entitled to all blessings, — even to the blessing of the vision of God.

Again, the pure in heart shall see God, because they are like God, and God will manifest himself to his own similitude. The Lord our God is holy, and rejoices in holiness, and makes himself evident to it, as to that which he approves and loves. On earth there is nothing so like God as purity. All that we see of great, is but a faint resemblance of his power; all that we behold of contrivance but weakly shows forth his wisdom. But a pure and holy heart, *that* is something which affords no mean likeness of divinity; an upright and spotless soul, *that* is a true image of God. The image sees its prototype; the copy seeks after and recognises its original; the created spirit, escaping from restraining bonds and blinding veils, rises to the creating Spirit, and holds communion with its source. Why should not the pure in heart see God? They are his elect; those whom he has chosen to himself, because they have chosen his ways, the ways which lead up to himself. They are of his family, brought near to him by his first-born Son; shall they not see their Father, now that they are near? They shall see him, by the promise and the birth-right; by revelation and by nature; by grace and by creation; by all that the Eternal Fountain imparts, and all that the immortal soul receives; by origin and by election; by likeness and by adoption.

And yet *how* shall they see God? Invisible, intangible, beyond human reach, and shrouded from mortal sense, as God is, how shall even the pure in heart, his children and his chosen see him?

With the natural eye they shall not, and cannot see him. The sight of the natural eye is limited to the vision of natural things. God is a spirit, and shows not

himself to dust. But to the soul he is manifest; to the immortal part he is revealed; Spirit to spirit, and by spirit. The spiritual eye discerneth spiritual things; and why not the source of all, even the Spirit of God? It does discern it, and with no faint or doubtful sight; its inward apprehension of the Deity is as clear as are the informations of sense; there are no clouds over it, there is no dimness before it; the spiritual image is depicted on the spiritual orb, bright and true. The pure in heart see God with certainty; they do not deceive themselves, they are not deceived.

1. They see God, in the first place, in his works. He is visible to them in the rocks and trees and fields and waters, in the hills and clouds and the shining hosts of heaven. In the beautiful there is something more to them than beauty; in the grand there is something more to them than majesty; in the sublime something higher than sublimity. It is God himself whom they see, God the Creator; him who made the outward world, and made it fair and wonderful because he is good and great, but who is beyond all its beauty, and above all its power. They not only see, therefore, the excellent things of the universe, and feel and acknowledge their excellence, but they perceive something surpassing it all. It is not a sense of the lovely alone which strikes their hearts, but "of something far more deeply interfused;" something which lives in the lifeless and speaks in the dumb; a spirit behind the veil, and shining through it; a form superior to all forms; a voice heard above all sounds, and after all sounds have ceased. They wait not to be led by a process of reasoning from the works to the Maker, from nature to nature's God. They may have been so

led in their spiritual nonage, but now, with assured steps they approach the Deity by a nearer way; even without moving, they find him; they have him always before them; they behold him *in* his works, and upon them. This directness of intercourse, this distinctness of impression, deserves the name of sight. No other word will sufficiently express it. It is not argument, nor inference, nor even conviction. It is sight. And thus the world itself is, to the pure in heart, divine; — not of itself, but through the Spirit which is viewed by their spirit everywhere throughout it. Without idolatry they worship it. Informed as it is by pervading and supreme divinity, it looks parentally upon them. There is pity in the gentle moonlight; and protection in the royal sun; and mercy in the falling dews, and the small rain. They dread not its darker features. To them there is no terror in the tempest, nor melancholy in the dropping leaves of autumn, nor desolation in the bareness of winter. The silent company of graves look up from the earth peacefully upon them; and the far off sky is the floor of heaven. And this is because God is always present with them, and they are present with God. It is because they see him in everything, and wherever they see him, love and adore him.

2. The pure in heart see God not only in his works, but in his providence and ways. They see him presiding over his moral government; directing the great march of events; ordering the springs of human action; distributing punishment and reward; uttering judgment and mercy; furnishing the support and ordaining the discipline of this world of his creatures. To their vision, reality assumes all its attributes; and the earth appears,

as it is, lying under the all-seeing eye, and guided by the unerring hand. Good and evil are before him, equally subject to his administration. The world is not a world of chances, a series of blind accidents; nor, what would be as bad, a world of the caprices and contradictions of human will; but a world of regular government, and appointed progression, bound as certainly in its moral course to the central mind, as in its natural orbit to the sun. They not only, in general terms, acknowledge God as a governor; they see him in the exercise of his government.

They perceive this government as extended to themselves. They see God, in the blessings which fall down from heaven on their hearts and lives. They see him, opening that divine hand by which they are filled with good: and they answer his benedictions by a still and humble and perpetual gratitude: They see him also in the sorrows which afflict them, and bow to them submissively, as to messengers from his throne. Joy and grief are not to them, as they are to some, mere accidents from without, happening to them without purpose, and dealt to them without discretion. They are both the expressions of God's constant care, and evidences of his paternity. It is the vision of God that imparts a feeling to every comfort, which doubles the amount of its intrinsic value. It is the vision of God, which, in every affliction, sheds a holy light upon their tears, and prevents every repining thought, and gives a healing virtue to every pain. They see God; and that is enough to sustain them under any burthen. They shall always see him; they have the promise. There is no hour in life so dark, as to absorb the blessed beams of his presence. Pure in

heart, they refer all to his will, and are satisfied that what he does is right, and where he is there must be happiness. They boast of no stoicism. They know that the good purposes of calamity would not be effected, were not its inflictions felt, and that therefore they were meant to be felt; but in all calamity, and all bereavement, and all pain, as well as in all enjoyment, they will be able to see God, and to say to him,

> "All are thy messengers, and all
> Thy sacred pleasure, Lord! obey;
> And all are training man to dwell
> Nearer to bliss, and nearer thee."

3. Thus the pure in heart shall see God here, even in this lower world, which to so many of its inhabitants is empty of his form, unenlightened by his presence, a collection of blank, unmeaning elements. But not here alone shall they see him. The vision of God is too precious and too lasting to be parted with like an earthly inheritance. The grave shuts out all other light, but it cannot impede that. They who have obtained the sight of the eternal God, must keep it through eternity. It is not a vision for time alone, to be broken up and scattered, as if it were a dream, by any change which can happen to man. It is steady, permanent, illuminating all space, piercing through all time, outlasting all light, sufficient of itself for the universe, beaming, warming, attracting and guiding, from age to age, and heaven to heaven, when fires are out, and suns are cold. In the future world, or worlds, the pure in heart shall see God, yet more gloriously than now; when more of infinity shall be opened to their gaze, and unmingled bliss shall flow out from his presence.

O how blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God, here, hereafter and forever! And how earnestly ought we to pray God to create a pure heart within us, that we may call that unspeakable vision ours! The impure heart is dark, "dark amid the blaze of noon;" for the divine light shines not into it; it cannot see God. Let us labor to cleanse our heart from everything which defiles it, that our sight may be purged from everything which dims it. Every spot on the heart is a film on the spiritual eye. Every sin is a beam in that eye, wounding and blinding it; making it shun the day, and seek the darkness, and shutting it up against the satisfying and saving vision of God. Diligently, diligently let us keep our heart; shunning profane and idle conversation; jealous lest an unholy thought or desire should find rest in it for a moment; faithful to wash out the stains of sin by the tears of repentance; and humbly imploring the dews of grace to fall on our imperfect work, and complete and sanctify the ablution.

1st Series. No. 94.

CHRISTIAN

UNITARIANISM

NOT A

NEGATIVE SYSTEM.

BY EZRA S. GANNETT.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.

April, 1835.

Price 4 Cents.

[This tract is taken from a discourse delivered at the dedication of the Unitarian meeting-house in Ipswich, Mass.]

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL STREET.

CHRISTIAN UNITARIANISM, &c.

Among the methods used to prejudice the public mind against Christian Unitarianism none is more common than the utterance of some vague objection, which has a fearful sound, and when once thrown abroad, no matter on what responsibleness or with what cause of justification, too often finds those who are ready to give it currency among the various classes of the indolent, the bigoted, and the unprincipled; — the indolent who will not take the trouble to ascertain its soundness, the bigoted who are willing to believe whatever can be said against a doctrine which does not belong to their creed, and the unprincipled who rejoice in scattering calumny and mischief. The want of precision, which would deprive such a charge of effect upon the candid and thoughtful, increases its power over minds of a different character, as the bluntness of some instruments, if it do not prevent their inflicting a wound, renders them more hurtful weapons.

One objection of this kind I do not remember to have seen so fully examined as its effect upon the community seems to me to require. I cannot suppose that it will be new to many persons, for it has been reiterated in one form or another from north to south. Its most popular form

of statement is brief, and alleges that "Unitarianism is a negative system," or with a slight change of the phrase, that "it is a system of negations." I propose to give this charge a patient examination;— to ascertain its probable or possible import, to show its injustice in any sense which can be allowed it, and to investigate the circumstances in which it may have had its origin or have found any color of plausibility.

I can discover but three senses that can be given to the expression which I have quoted. The negative character of a religious system must be seen either in its doctrines, its requisitions, or its effects.

1. The meaning of the charge may be that our faith embraces few positive or affirmative propositions. This is doubtless the sense in which we should take the remark, that "it is a system of negations." It has been said with an attempt at smartness, that "it consists in not believing." The ground of this assertion is the fact, that the Unitarian Christian does not receive certain doctrines of the Calvinistic or Orthodox theology. With equal reason therefore might the Calvinistic faith be said to consist in not believing, because the disciple of this school rejects the peculiar dogmas of other still larger divisions of the Christian Church. The unrighteousness of the insinuation is even apparent from the terms by which the party under censure is designated, — Unitarian Christians. Each of these terms expresses the belief of a great religious truth, viz. the unity of God, and the divinity of the teaching of Jesus Christ. We might therefore dismiss this form of the charge which we are considering without any farther reply. But there may be an advan-

tage in exposing its absurdity at greater length. A cursory survey of what we do believe, may show how far the assertion is correct, that our faith is of a negative character in respect to its doctrines.

We do then believe in the existence of a God; — a Being of infinite perfection — a pure Spirit — the Author, Sovereign, and Father of the universe — the Source of truth and love — the Spring of peace and joy. We believe in a moral government of the universe; by which all intelligent creatures are made subject to wise and immutable laws. We believe in a righteous providence; within which all things are included. We believe in the moral nature of man; in his freedom of choice, his capacity of improvement, and his liability to err. We believe in the divine mission of Jesus Christ; in his miracles, his perfect character, his authoritative teaching, his voluntary death, and his triumphant resurrection. We believe in the necessity of obedience to the will of God, and of repentance for sin; and in the inseparable connexion between goodness and happiness on the one hand, and wickedness and misery on the other. We believe in the immortality and accountableness of man; in spiritual judgment and future retribution. We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures in respect both to faith and to practice. We believe in the forgiveness of sins, in the efficacy of prayer, and in the importance of a deep and permanent change in them who lead vicious or careless lives. To sum up all in one line, we believe in God, in Christ, in duty here, and in recompense hereafter.

Now if this exposition of our belief does not contain enough which is affirmative or positive in its character,

it would be useless to collect any farther evidence to the same effect. We are neither atheists nor infidels. We disbelieve a great deal that has been believed; and we thank God that we have escaped the contagion of many errors which have prevailed in the world. But we also believe a great deal; nothing which is unintelligible or contradictory to sound reason, but much which reason alone would not have taught us. What we do believe, we find in the Bible. What we find in the Bible as a revelation from God we believe. In the scriptural sense we believe doctrines which under names borrowed from the Scriptures have been pressed as the chief articles of a Christian's faith, — as election, regeneration, atonement; — election — of communities to privileges, and of character to happiness, but not of individuals to heaven irrespectively of character; regeneration — by which he who is dead in sin is renewed through the influence of truth and is incited to work out his own salvation, but not a change wrought by a supernatural agency upon a passive subject; atonement — by which God and man are reconciled, not by appeasing the wrath of God, but by subduing the impenitence of man; these, and other doctrines under the same restriction of a scriptural origin and import, we believe. Still we prefer those unambiguous propositions in which I have already described our faith, and while they constitute its articles I am certainly justified in saying, that whoever pronounces it a system of negations knows nothing of it, or is willing to sacrifice truth to prejudice.

2. Under the next form which this charge may be made or be meant to assume, it touches the requisitions of our faith — its practical demands. It may be said, for

it has been said against presumptive and positive proof to the contrary, that Christianity as expounded by Unitarians imposes less of labor and duty on its disciples than the more popular faith. We have been told by those who assume to know its character better than it is known by us, that it requires very little of the sinner, that it is an easy religion, one which offers great inducements to the indolent and the worldly. Is this true? How do we, my brethren, understand the language of that system which we hold dear beyond all earthly things? May one be a consistent Christian Unitarian and yet do little for his own salvation and progress? No, no. This is a system which requires of its disciple the greatest measure of goodness that he can render, which prohibits every indulgence contrary to the strictest virtue, and imposes continual effort and conflict. Who that comprehends its requisitions would ever think of pronouncing them light? Its friends have been assailed with the complaint, that it expects too much of human nature, and leaves too much to mortal exertion. You exalt the instrumentality of man in his own salvation, some have said to us; you suppose that he can deliver himself from depravity and punishment. Is there not a palpable inconsistency in those who talk in this strain, charging us with holding a system that winks at the indulgence of human passion, and utters "smooth things" to human frailty? Unitarianism, as we receive it, the patron of a lax morality and a worldly spirit! Verily it requires a confidence by no means enviable, to make such an assertion in the face of all that has been said by advocate and by opposer. Let us, however, as before, ascertain the exact truth.

The commandments which we acknowledge to be bind-

concurred with his precepts in giving importance to this class of services. The language of the Apostles seems to us to be an echo of the voice of their Master. And hence we hold social morality in high consideration ; — not a cold, technical morality which confines itself to certain acts that it would be gross misconduct to neglect, but that true-hearted and thorough morality which takes as its model the Saviour dying for sinners. In our choice of the methods by which we should serve our fellow-men we may differ from other Christians, and our judgment may be wrong. But our religion, as we understand it, enjoins fidelity in seeking and using the means of doing good to every one who may be reached by our efforts or influence.

Such is a sketch of the requisitions of Christian Unitarianism. They demand the sacrifice of everything within, and resistance to everything without ourselves that is unfriendly to love, improvement, and usefulness. Life in our view is a course of duty, of hard and resolute duty. Labor and conflict are the conditions on which heaven will be opened to our souls. Whatever others may think, it is to me as clear as the sun that this system is distinguished by the severity of its requisitions.

3. The third interpretation which may be given to the charge under review makes it refer to the effects of the system. The faith which we profess produces no fruits of goodness, it is an inoperative faith, say its adversaries. Some of its friends have felt an embarrassment in meeting this charge, arising from what they consider the delicacy of their situation. As in repelling it they might appear to be justifying or praising themselves, they have let their opinions suffer rather than incur the imputation

of vanity. But there is no occasion for this reserve. On a question about facts running through a long course of time, and embracing many communities, we individually need not be taken into the account. It is not an inquiry respecting the effect of our opinions on us, so much as on the multitudes by whom they have been held in different ages. On this question of fact we may therefore join issue without any sacrifice of humility or any dread of the consequences. We affirm that Christian Unitarianism has produced the best fruits — that its effects have been abundant and excellent. Go back to its earliest date, and there apply the test. The Apostles were Unitarians; were not they holy men? The churches which they founded were composed of Unitarians; did they not mainly consist of good men? Follow the history of the Church downward from that period, and you find that error of doctrine and corrupt practice increased together, till in the prevalence of a false theology practical religion was almost extinguished. During the ages of intellectual and spiritual gloom which followed we here and there discover a few devoted servants of goodness, who also clung to the simple doctrines of the truth. When the voice of ecclesiastical reformation startled the churches of Europe, Unitarians were found among those who longed and labored to rescue Christendom from its bondage. As in later times greater freedom of examination and of speech has shown to the world in how many bosoms this faith is cherished, where shall we look for brighter examples of the Christian character? With a variety of diffusion that is worthy of notice in view of the comparatively small number of those who have acted independently of the influences that might have attached

them to the popular forms of belief, it has been seen in every condition of life, and in connexion with every stage of mental progress; as if it was intended by Providence, that with a limited number of disciples it should still have the greatest possible opportunity of proving its efficacy as a moral and spiritual agent. It has dwelt among the rich, teaching them moderation, beneficence, humility and devotion. It has visited the poor, inspiring in them contentment, gratitude and hope. It has irradiated the minds of the most gifted of the sons of earth, causing them to bow in adoration before the Father of their spirits and to make his will theirs. It has introduced itself into the uneducated mind, and strengthened it with a wisdom that is from above. It has been the friend and counsellor of the happy, while it has sustained the anxious, and consoled the sorrowful. In sickness it has tranquillized and cheered, in affliction it has given composure and resignation. It has guided men through life's trials, perils and duties, making them to be and to appear the children of God, and it has enabled the departing soul to meet death in peace. These are facts; which it is neither unjust nor arrogant to declare. They are facts which time has registered on the successive pages of that record which eternity will open to the view of the universe. That with such facts before them men, choosing to turn away their eyes or not to acknowledge what they saw, should call this faith inoperative — barren — negative — will not surprise us, if we are familiar with the history of the world, and the illustrations which it contains of the blindness and recklessness of partisan zeal. But so long as the effects of Christianity constitute an argument which the believer in its divine origin is bound to adduce

against the skeptic, so long will it be the duty of those who adopt our interpretation of Christ's teaching to disprove its inefficiency by an appeal to such facts. Our faith has been the instrument of sanctification and spiritual salvation. We meet the charge with a direct denial of its truth.

I have endeavored to show, that in neither of the senses in which, and in which alone, it can be taken, will the charge that Christian Unitarianism is a negative system bear examination. Its doctrines, if they be few, cannot be surpassed in solemnity or interest, while they avoid that ambiguity of expression which robs truth of its power. Its requisitions include every circumstance of life, every moment of time, every part of character, allowing no other aim than complete excellence, no motive but such as God might approve, no course of conduct inconsistent with the maxim, "always to abound in the work of the Lord," and no model less perfect than the example of Jesus Christ. Its effects have been great and good — upon individuals, upon families, upon communities, in the on-goings of time and in the prospects of eternity. A system of which all this can be said, and said with literal truth, deserves not the appellation of "negative." Let them by whom it has been applied, remember that brief but weighty precept of the Mosaic Law, "thou shalt not raise a false report."

With such evidence of its injustice before them some persons may be ready to ask how this charge could ever have found credit, or even have had an origin in the community. The answer to this question may not unprofitably detain us a few moments longer, while we con-

sider it relatively to each of those constructions which we have put upon this "false report."

1. I have already adverted to the fact, that a denial of some popular doctrines has given plausibility to the remark, that our "belief consists in unbelief;" and I have intimated that the Catholic may use this argument against the Protestant, of any denomination, with as much propriety as an Orthodox Protestant against a Unitarian Christian. "You," may the Catholic say, "deny the infallibility of the Church, the authority of tradition, the doctrines of transubstantiation and purgatory, the validity of some of the sacraments, the value of the religious service which we pay to the saints, and above all, the everlasting perdition of them who die out of the pale of the One Catholic Apostolic Church. You, Protestants, deny all these essential articles of a Christian's faith. Yours is nothing but a system of negations." How does the Protestant reply? By showing that he believes much which the Catholic takes into his creed, and rejects nothing which the New Testament makes essential to a Christian's faith. Look now at this same Protestant turning round upon another who like him has renounced the supremacy of the Pope, and upbraiding him with holding "a negative system," because he disbelieves the doctrines of the Trinity, total depravity, vicarious sacrifice, immediate conversion, and the endless torment of them who die not in the Orthodox faith; and persisting in the reproach, though his brother show him that he believes much which he takes into his own creed, and rejects nothing which the New Testament makes essential to a Christian's faith. What an example of consistency does this conduct of the Orthodox Protestant present! A curious and

instructive volume might be prepared from the writings of Catholic controversialists against Protestants and the replies which they have called forth, having for its object to collect the evidence that almost every reproach which Orthodoxy has brought against Unitarianism has been urged against Protestantism, and been repelled by the same arguments with which Unitarianism is defended.

The fact that we consider many of the articles of the popular belief unscriptural and unsound is not however the only circumstance that has induced the charge which we are examining. It has so happened, or rather it has been a necessary consequence of our situation, that we have been much occupied in proving the unsound and unscriptural character of these prevalent opinions. The difference between us and the majority of Christians indeed consists in our rejection of dogmas which they esteem sacred, that is, in disbelief on our part. Such dissent we have been compelled to justify. The great truths of the gospel it has not been our immediate object to defend, for these truths other bodies of Christians profess to hold in equal regard with ourselves ; although, as we contend, they mingle with them tenets which impair their value and often change their character. The Trinitarian, for example, believes in the infinite perfection of God, and the Calvinist in the immortality and accountableness of man. It is not therefore to establish these points that we have labored, but taking them for granted, we have endeavored to show that the infinite perfection of the Deity is inconsistent with a tri-personal existence, and that accountableness cannot be predicated of a being who by nature wholly corrupt could be made capable of holiness only by an irresistible action of the Divine Spirit,

and still farther, that the doctrines of the Trinity and of total depravity and supernatural conversion have no support in Scripture. Now I confess that if one should judge from some writings of Unitarians, regardless of the circumstances under which they have been placed, he might suppose that the overthrow of a false theology was the object which they had most at heart; for persons situated as they have been could act on the defensive only by taking the position of assailants. We have had enough, too much perhaps, of this sort of warfare. I rejoice that a different kind of writing is becoming more common among us. I would not have Christian Unitarianism always wear a belligerent aspect. It is not natural to it. Our dissent from Orthodoxy has been fully vindicated. What has been done will remain. Let the materials that have been collected be used. But let us cease to give our principal attention to the errors that prevail around us. Let our writings show, by the diligence with which they unfold the great truths of Christianity and the earnestness with which they press them on the conscience and the heart, that we desire yet more to make men feel the power of the truths which we believe than to disabuse their minds of the opinions which we condemn.

2. It may not seem so easy to account for the impression which has gone abroad that our faith is lax in its requisitions — that it is latitudinarian in its character. Yet two circumstances will suggest the probable explanation of this fact. In the first place, it should be considered that no charge can be levelled at a religious system with so fatal aim as this, — that it inculcates a loose morality. A certain class of people indeed may like

it the better for bearing this character, but they are not found among the intelligent or the serious. Those who entertain a respect for religion, — in whatever form this respect be manifested, whether in practical piety or in mere support of institutions, — are shocked at the thought of a religious system that does not frown upon any approach to immorality; while the enlightened and thoughtful, whether believers in the Christian religion or not, perceive the absurdity of holding out the New Testament in one hand and a loose code of morals in the other. The truth is, the bulk of mankind approve, though they do not adopt, a strict system of religion. They will invent numberless devices to escape from its requisitions, but the propriety of its requiring them "to fulfil all righteousness" they are as ready to allow and as eager in defending as the most rigid moralist. Hence no cry can be started respecting any form of religious belief so sure to awaken a general prejudice against it as the cry of "latitudinarianism." This is especially true in New England, where the associations of the people are in favor of a strict, and even a stern morality. If men desire to render a system obnoxious, and are not very scrupulous about the means, and therefore not particularly careful to avoid giving utterance to a false surmise, let them brand it with the appellation of "loose" or "worldly," and they take the shortest method to effect their purpose. Now this has been precisely the case in respect to Unitarianism. Since it must be prevented from gaining favor, some of its opposers, ignorantly, we may hope, but not unadvisedly, set this report in circulation, and having committed themselves chose for "conscience' sake" (i. e. for the sake of keeping their con

sciences quiet — in which sense the phrase must often be understood) to remain in ignorance. But meanwhile what have they done? Raised a false report, which being once started by respectable names has spread in a thousand directions and been propagated "on authority" by countless voices. Who can wonder that our faith labors under unjust reproach?

To another circumstance I attach still more value in this connexion. We do not concur with some of our fellow Christians in condemning certain practices which they hold in abhorrence. We do not pronounce all amusement and festivity wicked, nor account the man a reprobate who uses his senses as avenues of enjoyment. We hold excess and abuse to be sinful, but we do not find in the teaching or example of our Master authority for an ascetic rigor or an indiscriminate censure of the ways of the world. Again, we do not adopt certain rules of outward life on which other Christians insist. Nor do we approve of all the measures which they use to make themselves and others better. We hesitate not to question the propriety of some of these measures; yea, more, to expose what we think their true character and depict their legitimate effects. But what follows from all this difference between us and others? That our system presents a lower standard of duty than theirs, or even that we are not as good men and as good Christians as they? No. The gospel does not warrant us in drawing either of these conclusions from the facts before us. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous;" not he who attends most meetings, nor he who has most of the show and circumstance of religion. Let these exterior habits constitute the test, and ay again that the Catholic has vastly

the advantage over the Protestant. Where in all America will you find a man that will rival the Franciscan monk of the fifteenth century in abstinence from worldly pleasures, or the Jesuit missionaries of the seventeenth in efforts for the salvation of sinners, or the Catholic of the present day in the multiplication of religious services? Nay, the Mahommedan fanatic will surpass the Catholic, and the miserable victim of superstition in India outdo them all. I would not speak on this subject in other tones than those of sobriety and charity, but I must speak with feeling. So far as Christian Unitarianism deserves the reproach of not binding its disciples to observe rules of conduct which the Christian Scriptures nowhere recommend, let it bear that reproach; its great Teacher was censured for eating with publicans and sinners. But when men proceed a step further and pronounce it a lax or worldly system, let us speak in its behalf as we would speak in behalf of a friend whose character was traduced by slander.

3. If, in the last place, we consider the charge that ours is a negative faith as founded on an observation of its effects, it will not be difficult to explain the origin of such a remark. What has just been said must again be brought into view; for the evidence that Unitarianism does not impose a strict discipline upon its professors is drawn from their conduct. Our guide in duty is the same as that of other Christians — the New Testament. If our standard is defective, so is theirs. The two last forms of this charge therefore, although containing distinct allegations, must be substantiated by the same proofs. One reason then for declaring that our faith does not produce the fruits of true religion may appear in the differ-

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ence of opinion between us and others respecting the nature of these fruits. They value certain things as marks of the Christian character which we do not so esteem; and all proof of the inefficacy of our faith which rests on an estimate of these things we of course consider irrelevant. When we can go to the New Testament to ascertain what are "the fruits of the spirit" of Christ, we cannot allow the authority of man's judgment.

Another circumstance that should be regarded here is the paucity of our numbers. We are few in comparison with most other sects. Ten years ago Unitarianism was professed by a still smaller number than at present. Is it wonderful that we have not accomplished so much in our day of weakness as others in their day of strength? Besides, as was observed, we have been too busy in maintaining our own ground to think much of evangelizing others. Where are your missionary establishments? say our opponents; where your societies that receive vast sums into their treasuries and compass the globe in the prosecution of their objects? where your gigantic enterprises and your magnificent schemes for the good of the world? Suppose we can only point to the future and say, they are there; — does it follow that we have done nothing, because we have not set any great and noisy machinery in motion? Or suppose that we should retort upon those who question us with the inquiry, where were your societies and your plans and your establishments at the close of the last century? what was Orthodoxy doing for nearly three hundred years? — what reply could they give? But there is another method of silencing the taunt which I prefer. I affirm, and facts justify the affirmation, that the success which has attended the efforts of

Unitarians in converting men to Christianity and to God has not been exceeded on a fair comparison by the success which has followed the efforts of any other denomination of Christians, but that the instrumentality which they have used has effected more than the same amount of instrumentality in any other hands. And I hence infer that Christian Unitarianism is "the power of God unto salvation."

While such remarks as these might be pursued to almost any length, I am prepared to waive them, and to confess that Unitarians as a sect have not done so much as they ought for Christianity either by direct efforts or by the force of example. But I expressly maintain that this negligence is no proof of the inefficacy of their opinions. For with all the error and defect that may justly be imputed to those who hold these opinions, sufficient evidence, as was said a few pages back, has been given to put the spiritual power of these sentiments beyond all doubt. I grieve only, that what if properly understood would have become "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" to every one by whom it was received, has been rendered almost a dead letter through misapprehension of its nature. Two or three causes have conduced to this result.

In speaking of the disapprobation with which the greater part of mankind were disposed to regard a religious system which did not enjoin a strict morality, it was remarked, that to a certain class of men a lax religion must be acceptable, — men who would be glad to bear a respectable name under the shelter of a system which allowed them to gratify their sensual or earthly tastes. They hear Unitarianism represented as such a

system, and at once enlist themselves among its advocates, not with the intention of becoming better men, but for the sake of appearance, reputation or worldly interest. In this country a man secures more respect and confidence by professing a regard to Christianity than by openly despising it. Unitarianism has disciples too among men of education and influence. To those who desire to be Christians in name, and in name only, it offers according to the statement of its adversaries peculiar attractions. By such persons therefore it will naturally be taken as convenient for their purpose. But which ought we to condemn, — the system, or the misrepresentation which brings such men into the number of its professors? Having once called themselves Unitarians on the false idea which they have received of its character, they abide with us, to our great annoyance and to the diffusion of the unjust impression to which we owe their appearance among us. Such men, be it understood, cannot represent our faith, because they know nothing of it.

Others are brought into connexion with our societies through their dislike to Orthodoxy. They are offended with the sentiments or measures of the predominant party in a town, and learning that Unitarians disapprove of these sentiments or these measures, they immediately call themselves Unitarians, and pass for such in the community. They become zealous champions of "the cause," are active in putting down the obnoxious opinions, and betray the very worst kind of zeal. With them it is a sufficient objection to any measure, that it is adopted by those from whom they dissent in regard to articles of faith. Propose a religious meeting in the course of the week, or a society for any purpose connected with the spread of

Christian truth, or even a Sunday school, and they decline to take part in such a scheme, because "it will be doing as the Orthodox do;" as if that were any reason either for acting or for refusing to act. I have no sympathy, indeed I have not patience with this spirit of opposition. It is the very dregs of illiberality. Such adherents cannot aid a cause, — men who love it not, but hate that with which it may happen to be contrasted. We want not such Unitarians among us. Mere partisans, they neither understand us nor our system.

There are yet others, who belong to our societies because circumstances independent of their religious persuasions have brought them among us, — persons who would have swollen the ranks of any other denomination if they had been differently situated. It depends upon anything more than upon their faith or their choice whether they shall worship in a Unitarian or a Calvinistic church. They care very little about religion, either dogmatic or practical. They are thinking only of their business or their pleasure, and trouble themselves neither about theological discussion nor spiritual improvement. In short, they are in no sense of the word religious men. But what can hence be proved? That our faith lacks vitality and power? No, certainly not. It only appears that these men have not felt its power. Among Christians of every sect may be found persons of this character; shall we therefore say that Christianity is an inefficient, negative, system? The inference is as fair in the one case as in the other. There were bad men in the Christian Church in its earliest and purest days. Did not Paul speak of those who "held the truth in unrighteousness?" and may not the truths of revealed as well

as of natural religion be held in unrighteousness? Did not Peter predict the rise of those in the bosom of the Church who should cause "the truth to be evil spoken of?" If we take the conduct of some who bring discredit on the name which they bear as a proof of the character of their system, instead of looking at those whom it has formed after the image of Christ, what system will escape condemnation?

If to such causes as these may be traced the accusation which I have attempted to disprove, how plain is the duty of those who cherish the opinions against which it is urged. It rests with them to determine what credit this report shall enjoy. So far as it respects our doctrinal tenets, we, my brethren, can only declare them openly and explicitly; if others will persist in calling a substance a shadow, we cannot help it. So far as the moral or spiritual character of our faith is concerned, we must endeavor to present it in its true light; if men will be blind, we cannot compel them to see. But so far as the efficacy of this system is involved, we can by our example afford an undeniable argument in its favor. We may convince men in spite of ignorance and prejudice and interest, that Christian Unitarianism is endued with a divine energy. Believe me, this argument no one can gainsay or resist. Men yield to it sooner than to any other. It addresses their senses, it addresses their reason, it addresses their hearts. How have many Unitarians from time to time secured the honor of being considered by the opponents of their faith exceptions to a general truth — anomalies, as it were, in the moral world? By their characters. It is our characters, our lives, that must

prove the efficiency of our system. The times are full of warning on the one hand and of encouragement on the other. A crisis seems to be approaching throughout Christendom. I verily believe it is for us to say, whether the Christian world shall rejoice in the peaceful light of truth, or be tossed amidst storm and darkness. Look abroad. See France the prey of irreligion, Catholic Europe half rent from its allegiance to the Papal Power, Germany thirsting and toiling after the right belief, while England, the champion of Christianity, is trembling under the necessity of a reform in her ecclesiastical Establishment, for which she can at this moment neither summon the courage nor command the strength. Look at our own continent. See the republics of South America casting themselves again into the arms of the Romish hierarchy, because they cannot learn that there is any better condition to which they might aspire. Look at home. The people are longing for a fervent and earnest religion, and in pursuit of it have rushed into the wildest extravagances, from which they have but just now recoiled. Let us give them what they want. Tell them that ours is a rational system, and they may not understand you. Show them that it is Scriptural, and even then they may not be moved to embrace it. But convince them that it is instinct with vital godliness, and they will seize upon it with exultation. The words of the Saviour will be verified, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." Oh, that we were alive to the responsibilities of our situation.

Presumptuous as it may seem, it is far, very far from impossible that the destinies of the world are in our hands. The truth by which mankind must be regene-

rated, before which error, superstition, bigotry and fanaticism must flee as the shades of night before the rising sun, is ours. We may cause it to shine forth with irresistible power. Let us but feel its awful majesty, its surpassing loveliness, its divine excellence, its spiritual potency, and we shall let it beam from our characters in its native radiance. Our duty, I repeat, is plain. Providence announces it. The voice of posterity seems to anticipate the approach of a coming age, that it may call us to its discharge. A cloud of witnesses among the philanthropic and redeemed are bending from their celestial abodes to watch our fidelity. The universe is pouring entreaty upon our ears. Awake, if ye slumber. Be faithful to yourselves and to your race, faithful for Christ's sake, faithful before God.

1st Series. No. 95.

THE

TENTH REPORT

OF THE AMERICAN

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE ANNUAL MEETING,

MAY 26, 1835.

BOSTON:
CHARLES BOWEN, 141, WASHINGTON STREET.
JUNE, 1835.

Price 6 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL ST.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY.

The American Unitarian Association celebrated its tenth anniversary on the evening of Tuesday, May 26, 1835. The members met for the transaction of business at half past six o'clock, in the Berry-street Vestry, Rev. Dr. Bancroft, the President, in the chair.

The records of the last annual meeting were read. The Treasurer presented the following Statement of Receipts and Expenditures, which was accepted.

Boston, May 26, 1835.

To the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen, — My account as Treasurer of the Association is herewith submitted, with a statement of the Receipts and Expenditures for the past year. The balance in the treasury is $1176,05.

I also submit a separate account as Treasurer of the fund for the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association, by which you will perceive that for all the subscriptions to that fund, only $9578,69 has been collected. There has been paid to the Agent, and for incidental expenses, $1689,14, which leaves a balance on hand of $7889,95; to which must be added $553,37 for interest on the money, making $8442,92 subject to your direction.

I am, Gentlemen,

Respectfully yours,

HENRY RICE.

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, FROM MAY 28, 1834, TO MAY 26, 1835.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 28, 1834, -		1739,87
From Annual Subscribers, - - -	10,00	
" Life Members, - - -	90,00	
" Auxiliary Societies, - - -	1477,74	
" Donations, - - - -	13,00	
" Sales of Tracts, - - -	323,58	
" the Treasurer, — Interest, - -	69,17	
		1983,49
		$3723,36

EXPENDITURES.

Paid Rev. E. L. Bascom, preaching at Savannah,	50,00	
" Rev. W. G. Elliot, preaching at St. Louis,	50,00	
" printing and binding tracts,	642,96	
" bills of paper for tracts,	1408,00	
" Charles Bowen, one year's salary as General Agent,	300,00	
" Wm. Hales, balance of Domestic Mission fund,	80,10	
" Incidental expenses,	16,25	
		2547,31
Balance,		1176,05

HENRY RICE, *Treasurer.*

Boston, May 26, 1835.

The following letter from the Rev. J. Whitman, resigning his office as General Secretary, was read.

BOSTON, MAY 26th, 1835.

To the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association.

GENTLEMEN, — Having received an invitation to become the Pastor of the Second Unitarian Society in Portland, Maine, and believing that the labors of a pastor will better comport with my health, than those of my present situation, I hereby tender my resignation of the office of General Secretary of the American Unitarian Association.

I deem it my duty on retiring from this office, to express my deep conviction of its importance, and my earnest hope that there may be no difficulty nor delay in obtaining some one to enter upon its duties.

With gratitude for the happiness enjoyed in my connexion with you as one of your number, and with sentiments of personal esteem,

I am, Gentlemen, very truly yours,

JASON WHITMAN.

On motion of Rev. Mr. Sewall of Danvers, the thanks of the Association were voted to Rev. Mr. Whitman for his services, as General Secretary.

On motion of Rev. Mr. Muzzy of Cambridgeport, a special committee, consisting of Rev. Messrs. Muzzy, Walker and Briggs, were appointed to confer with the Executive Committee in regard to supplying the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of the General Secretary.

The time for the public services in the church having arrived, it was voted, on motion of Rev. Mr. Gannett, that the choice of officers be deferred until Wednesday, at 12 o'clock, and that when the Association adjourn, it adjourn to meet at that time.

At half past seven o'clock, the Association proceeded to the Federal Street Church. Prayers were offered by Rev. Henry Colman of Deerfield. The Annual Report of the Executive Committee was read by the General Secretary of the past year.

TENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The circumstances under which the Executive Committee present their Tenth Annual Report, are peculiar and require a peculiar course of remark. During the past year the Association has employed a new instrument for the accomplishment of its objects. The General Secretary has been engaged in the active discharge of the duties of his office. The attention, therefore, of the community will be directed to one point, and all will earnestly desire to learn the course which has been pursued and the amount of good which has been accomplished, in order to form some estimate of what may be expected from this office. This desire is natural and proper. It should be met with a full and explicit answer.

The duties of the General Secretary have been divided into two distinct classes, those of a Resident and Corresponding Secretary, and those of a travelling Missionary and Agent. In the discharge of the first division of his duties the General Secretary has commenced several different classes of correspondence.

I. In the first place, he has endeavored to open a correspondence with all Auxiliary Associations. This correspondence has related to the history and condition of these Associations; to the best means of enlarging their numbers and increasing the amount of their contributions; to the manner in which the tracts have been received,

and the estimation in which they are held, and the good which they are thought to have accomplished; to the wants of the community in this respect, and the subjects upon which it is most important that tracts should be prepared; and, finally, to the best means of keeping alive the interest of the individual members, and strengthening the sympathy which is desirable between the Parent Association and all its Auxiliaries. It has been the object of this correspondence to ascertain, as accurately as possible, the peculiar wants of the community, that so the operations and exertions of the American Unitarian Association might the better meet and supply them, and to learn the causes which have operated, either to increase or to diminish, the usefulness of these Auxiliaries. In most cases answers to these letters have been promptly returned. From the answers which have been returned it is ascertained, that the majority of the Associations are in a flourishing condition, while others have languished. In some, occasional meetings are held for consultation upon the objects of the Association, and for religious intercourse. And the testimony in regard to these meetings is, that they serve to excite and keep alive the interest of the members. In other cases, there is not even the form of an organization. The members are simply subscribers to the tracts as to a periodical publication, having an agent to transact their business. In such cases the interest has generally languished, and the number of subscribers has gradually diminished. From this correspondence it has been ascertained that the tracts, which have been published during the past year, have been well received, that some of them have been regarded as peculiarly adapted to the wants of the times, and have given

high satisfaction. Much has also been learned from this correspondence in regard to the particular subjects which more especially demand attention, and the peculiar style best adapted to the tastes of the community. And this information is precisely the kind which the Committee desire to aid them in their efforts. From the advantages attending the bare commencement of this correspondence high anticipations may be indulged as to its future good influences when it shall have become more frequent and full.

2. In the second place, a correspondence has been commenced with the different clergymen of our faith throughout the land. This correspondence has related to the history and condition of their respective societies. One object has been to obtain, if possible, an accurate statistical knowledge of our denomination, and to mark the visible progress which we have made from year to year. A second object has been, to learn from the clergymen in different parts of our land, if there were openings in their respective regions favorable to the promulgation of our views, and to obtain the names and address of individuals, in such places, with whom correspondence might be opened. A third object has been, to call the attention of every clergyman in the denomination to the wants of the community in regard to the supply of the pulpit, and to the best means of meeting these wants. This correspondence has only been commenced. But a small number of the clergymen have been written to. In most cases prompt and full answers have been received. Much information has been obtained. And it is confidently believed that a correspondence of this kind, if judiciously conducted, may be of much advantage.

3. A third division of this correspondence embraces

letters to laymen in different parts of our land, who are themselves Unitarians, but who reside in places where there are no Unitarian societies. The objects of this correspondence have been to cheer such individuals in their loneliness, to unite them more closely with ourselves in the bonds of religious sympathy, and to learn from them the state of opinions around them upon the subject of religion, and the degree to which indifference and scepticism prevail. In the answers which have been received to this class of letters, there has been manifested the earnest longings which some individuals, in such situations, have for the unmolested enjoyment of Christianity in its purity, and their grateful sense of any manifestation of interest on the part of those who are in more favored circumstances than themselves. Besides, from men who are in the midst of those who differ from us in opinion, and who mingle freely with their fellow-men in the ways of business, much may be learned in regard to the real objections which are urged against our opinions, and the kind of effort necessary to interest the great mass of the community in the truth as it is in Jesus. Intercourse of this kind is capable of indefinite extension. There is scarcely any part of our land, in which there may not be found men of the class alluded to, with whom it may be of the utmost importance to hold free communion, both to their own religious improvement, and to the spread of what we regard as the truth. And then, too, this correspondence may be the means of increasing the circulation of our periodical publications, as in this way, they may, without impropriety, be introduced to the notice of those before unacquainted with them. And, finally, it may be the means of intro-

ducing the living preachers of our faith into different parts of the land, and to those who will receive them with open arms, and rejoice in their ministrations. No one can doubt the great importance and advantage of enlarging and carefully cultivating this division of the correspondence.

4. The fourth division embraces the foreign correspondence of the office. This has heretofore been conducted by the Foreign Secretary; and amid the multiplicity of other objects, it has received but a small share of attention. An answer to one communication, from a friend in England, giving an account of the state of Unitarianism in that and neighboring countries, has already been laid before the public. Letters have been sent to others, and especially to the Foreign Secretary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. But answers to these letters have not as yet been received. This interchange of thoughts and feelings between ourselves and our brethren in other lands, it is conceived is of the utmost importance. We are engaged in the same struggle with them, — the struggle for the right of individual independence in matters of religious opinion. We are engaged as we trust in the same struggle with them for the subversion of error and sin, and the establishment of truth and holiness. It is right then, that we should strive to cheer each other's hearts, and strengthen each other's hands. And then, too, those who differ from us have endeavored to dishearten our friends in Europe by discouraging accounts of our condition in this land, and to dishearten our friends in this land by discouraging accounts of the condition and prospects of our cause in Europe. This renders it doubly important that we should endeavor to cultivate an ac-

quaintance, and to keep up a frequent correspondence with those in other lands who have embraced similar religious sentiments with ourselves.

5. A fifth division of the correspondence of the office has been with members of different religious denominations. One object of this correspondence has been to ascertain, if possible, the precise points in which we agree in sentiment, and the amount and character of our differences of opinion. Another object has been to bring about, not an amalgamation of sects, but a more kindly state of feeling among different Christian denominations. It is thought that much good may be accomplished by this kind of correspondence aiming at the objects specified. For it is believed, that if Christians of different denominations, instead of keeping aloof from each other, and discussing their differences of opinion, will come together and define these differences until they understand each other's use of language, they will not find themselves so essentially at variance as they had supposed. And then, too, it was thought important, that since different denominations cannot agree with each other in speculation, they should cherish the unity of spirit, and preserve with each other the bond of peace. It is believed that, with prudence and discretion, a correspondence of this kind may be opened with members of all the principal denominations in our land, — not only with those who most nearly agree with us in opinion, but with those who most widely differ from us, and that if conducted in the right spirit, it may be productive of Gospel peace and harmony.

6. The sixth and last division of the correspondence of the office and that which has been the most extensive during the past year, has been on mere matters of busi-

ness, — relating to the supply of pulpits, and to a vast variety of other topics. In regard to the whole subject of correspondence, one remark should be made. There has been generally manifested in the letters received, a respect for the Association, a promptness in imparting information, and a perfect readiness in offering suggestions as to the wants of the community, and the best means of supplying them.

In the discharge of the second division of his duties, the General Secretary has gone forth in two different and distinct capacities, — simply as a Christian Minister, and as an Agent of the Association.

1. In the first place, he has gone forth simply as a Christian Minister to visit and preach to feeble societies. In these visits it has been his endeavor, by ascertaining and adapting himself to the peculiar circumstances of the place which he visited, to advance the cause of vital religion. If the spirit manifested in any particular place has seemed to him to be a truly devout and Christian spirit, he has endeavored to cherish and increase it. If there has been manifested a spirit simply of opposition to other denominations, he has endeavored by every means of influence which he possessed, to check and restrain it. If there has appeared to be indifference to religion, and an unwillingness to support its institutions, he has either spoken directly upon the importance of religious institutions, and urged the obligations of every real Christian and every true patriot to support them, — or else he has endeavored to excite and deepen a feeling of interest in religion itself, by plain, direct and affectionate appeals to men's hearts and consciences. As his visits of this kind have been confined to New England and to societies al-

ready organized as Unitarian societies, he has felt himself called upon in but few cases to enter upon controversy. He has endeavored to present explicit statements of doctrines, but has dwelt principally upon the great practical principles of the Gospel.

In his advice to feeble societies he has discouraged reliance upon assistance from abroad, and has urged to greater efforts and greater sacrifices on the part of these feeble societies themselves, for the support of religious institutions. In cases where feeble societies have been situated near each other, he has suggested the expediency of acting in concert, and employing one preacher for both societies, — each enjoying his services in proportion to the amount respectively contributed for his support. In these visits he has uniformly been received with kindness.

2. In the second place, the General Secretary has gone forth as the Agent of the American Unitarian Association, to advocate its claims upon the affections and the patronage of Unitarian Christians, and to strengthen Associations already in existence, or revive or form new ones where there were none. He has, during the year, visited thirty different Unitarian parishes in this capacity. In most of these parishes there were auxiliaries already formed. These have been made more fully acquainted with the principles on which the American Unitarian Association is based, the objects it proposes to accomplish, and the means by which it aims to accomplish them. They have been urged to greater and more persevering exertions, and have been cheered and encouraged in their efforts. In some places the subject has been laid before the people, and no final action has been

had upon it. Five new, and, it is believed, flourishing auxiliaries, have been formed. Three, which were in a languishing condition, have been re-organized, and are now flourishing and efficient.

The Committee have heretofore expressed at different times their opinion, that there should be auxiliaries formed in every Unitarian parish, and in every town and village where a few individuals can be found who have embraced our opinions. They would now repeat that opinion, and would suggest that efforts should be made to keep alive the interest of the members of auxiliaries, to add from time to time to their numbers, and to cherish a strong feeling of sympathy with the Parent Association. As the means of effecting these objects, the Committee would more particularly suggest,

1st. That all auxiliaries hold occasional or frequent meetings for consultation, upon the objects of the Association, and for the purpose of religious intercourse. This, it is thought, will serve to keep alive the interest of the members in the objects for which they are associated, to increase their interest in each other as Christians, and to promote their mutual religious improvement.

2d. That all auxiliaries should take an active part in looking after and endeavoring to promote the cause of pure religion in their respective regions. This, it is thought, would serve to keep alive the interest of the members in the progress of truth, and strengthen their attachment to it.

3d. That each auxiliary should require its secretary to present an annual report of the state of the association, that this report should be transmitted to the General Secretary, and that each secretary of an aux-

iliary should hold as frequent correspondence as may be convenient with the General Secretary of the American Unitarian Association. In this way more accurate knowledge can be gained of the real condition of the denomination, and a deeper feeling of union between the Parent Association and its auxiliaries, may be excited. These suggestions the Committee would hope will be received in kindness, and the propriety of them tested by actual experiment.

At the time of the effort made to establish the office of General Secretary, much was said of the wants of the West. It has been judged expedient to attend first to things nearest home, and consequently the General Secretary has spent the past year within the limits of New-England. Still the wants of other parts of our land have not been forgotten. In the correspondence of the office, communications have been received from the clergymen of our faith who have gone into distant places, and from laymen interested in the progress of our opinions. It was thought that in this manner even the year spent in New-England might in part be employed in preparing the way for more successful visits to other and distant places. The information gained by this correspondence may perhaps be best made known by a few extracts from the letters which have been received.

A correspondent from the interior of the State of New-York writes : — "I have no question that Unitarianism would be extensively received after a little time, if the proper efforts were used for its dissemination. But there is only one effective method of diffusing it, — that is, by the living voice. A missionary constantly preaching in this region must be the agent who shall occasionally re-

lieve the settled ministers, and devote the rest of his time to visiting the principal places, — frequently explaining our views, — making Unitarianism so familiar that the people shall not shun it as soul-destroying heresy, — that they shall see that their own minds as well as Unitarians, have been abused by the misrepresentations which have been put forth. Thus a spirit of action for us may be gradually excited. But no man must expect to go into a place and find a society ready formed to his hand ; or to be able to form one immediately, before the minds of the people are prepared for it. There will be combined opposition. There is much skepticism among us, both latent and avowed, both deistical and atheistical, but it is not organized. Unquestionably, false doctrine and the fanaticism of revivalists greatly increase the skepticism of this region. People are driven from Church, and from indifference pass to ridicule and scoffing, till they become confirmed infidels. Nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus can save them. To spread Unitarian views of Christianity is the great philanthropic work of the day. The interests of humanity hang on the prevalence of our great practical principles, ' Liberty, Holiness, Love.' "

A correspondent from another part of the same State writes : — " I am at a loss to express an opinion as to the probable success of Unitarianism in this vicinity, although I ardently desire it. My impressions are strongly in favor of the probability of success, if the preaching is faithful, and, in addition to this, energetic. You probably know something of the spirit of the people in this portion of the country ; almost every one is bust-

ling, hurried, ardent, speculating. They like impetuosity."

A correspondent from Virginia writes: — "We want preachers, — men who are willing to endure persecution, to spend and be spent in the cause of their Master; who feel a deep interest in the cause of practical religion; who will speak the truth in love, and recommend their faith by their lives."

A correspondent from Kentucky writes: — "For the immediate prospects of Unitarianism in this region, I cannot say much. Hearers can be gained by any man who can *talk* to the people in any part of the West. In Nashville there seems to be particular attention paid to Unitarianism just at present. In Illinois there is much good ground preparing for our faith. It is, however, my firm conviction that Unitarianism, as a system of principles and opinions, can make no headway in the West against the constant opposition and outcry which, as a matter of course, is raised against it, till we adopt a determinate system of operations. Would the American Unitarian Association appoint a capable agent for the Western States alone for one or two years, he, with the co-operation which we might give him, would no doubt succeed in establishing auxiliary associations enough nearly to defray his own salary. I wish you would consider this. It is a matter of vital importance in my opinion. One year I think might do an incalculable amount of good. You ask in regard to infidelity. I am fully convinced that the outcry about Western infidelity is unfounded. The people are not infidels. All the infidelity which exists is avowed, open. Infidelity is tolerated, but infidelity is not liked. In truth all reflecting

men or women in this wild region see the necessity of religious restraints upon the conscience. But there is a vast deal of indifference to religion."

In this extract there is an allusion to the state of things in Illinois. A friend in Salem, Mass. has favored the General Secretary with extracts from a letter received from a correspondent in that State. It is as follows: — "To your inquiries respecting Unitarianism in this State, I can answer from a pretty extensive acquaintance in this and the adjoining counties, that there is an excellent field now open. I have been surprised, upon inquiry, to find that nearly all our professional men, and many of our merchants, are Unitarians." The letter from which the above is an extract, is dated at Peoria, Illinois.

A correspondent from the interior of Pennsylvania writes: — "As to the means of advancing Unitarianism in the West, I think there is great weight in the opinions of a friend who has long resided here, and who is certainly one of the most discriminating and practical men I ever knew. It is his opinion that nothing would yield a readier return than the sending out of missionaries, of the right spirit and talents, who would be willing to work. I believe that many congregations, of sufficient numbers and strength to form a good nucleus, might be gathered by them; and I only wish that the Association had the means of sending out hundreds of such missionaries."

Perhaps we cannot better close this exposition of the wants of the West, than in the words of the friend from Salem, before alluded to. His remarks relate principally to the State of Illinois, but will admit of a more extensive application. He writes: — "I am more and more

convinced of the importance and the duty of adopting immediately some measures for the diffusion of our views of Christian truth in those States bordering upon the Mississippi. The tide of emigration is setting thither with tremendous rapidity and force ; society is in its elementary state ; combination has not yet taken place. We ought to be there with God's truth, while the great process is going on. We ought to be ready to put the stamp of truth and holiness upon the new-formed work. It seems to me that nothing is so important, whether we regard the interests of truth itself or the moral welfare of our fellow-men, as for us to make that distant region, every day multiplying in its population, more and more the scene of our efforts. We should have one or two missionaries there all the time ; men of Christian devotedness ; men of power and of a sound mind."

It has been the object of the statements which have thus far been made, to point out the course which has been pursued under the new arrangement, by which a General Secretary has been employed. It will not be expected that great and visible results of the first year's labor should be witnessed. It has been rather a year of inquiry and investigation, — a year in which exertions have been commenced, and ways opened for more extensive and successful efforts in future. It is sufficient to remark that, from what has been accomplished, much may be expected from future similar exertions.

A wise regard, however, is always to be had to times and circumstances. The tendency of the present times is to change the ground of contest ; and under the influence of this tendency it is every day becoming more and more a moral contest. The community are directing their attention more and more to the character and influence of differ-

ent sects of Christians. They are watching to see which denomination will bring themselves into the most entire subjection to Christian principles, — to see which can imbibe most fully and breathe most purely the spirit of Christ, — to see which can manifest most readiness in making sacrifices in the cause of religion. Such is the tendency of the present times. And this contest, which is fast hastening on, will be more difficult than any in which we have ever yet engaged. And this for two reasons. It is much easier to open the Bible and collect, arrange, and classify texts in the support of opinions, than it is to subject one's appetites, and passions, and inclinations to the control of religious principle. It is much easier to gain the victory in a contest with others for the truth of opinions, than it is in a contest with ourselves for the supremacy of principles.

And then, too, this will be a contest in which it is not possible, as in an argumentative controversy, for some learned, or powerful, or eloquent champion to gain the victory for the whole denomination. This will be a controversy to be carried on by every individual for himself and within himself. And it is of more importance than is generally supposed, that we prepare ourselves for this state of things. For there is a large class in the community who have no particular objection to our speculative opinions, but who have a strong suspicion, how unjust soever it may be, that our system lacks moral power. One advantage, however, of the change which seems to be taking place, will be, that our controversy with others and our duty to ourselves, will become one and the same thing. Every individual who may honestly and faithfully strive to maintain a truly Christian life, and

to manifest a truly Christian disposition, will add much to the character and to the good influence of the denomination with which he may be connected. And then, too, this will be a controversy in which there will be but one straight-forward course to be pursued in order to meet all the different classes of those who may oppose us. If we subject our own hearts to the influence of Christian principles, and manifest in our own lives the moral power of the Gospel, we shall do more than in any other way we could do to establish our system in opposition to fanaticism, bigotry and superstition on the one hand, and indifference, worldly-mindedness and skepticism on the other. Here then is a work for which we should prepare, and in the preparation for which individuals and societies may at once engage, — individuals, in labors for their own religious growth, and societies, in endeavors to promote mutual religious improvement.

In closing this report, the American Unitarian Association itself, and the estimation in which it is and should be held by the Unitarian community, demand a brief notice. This Association has now been in operation ten years. It is the only organization in the denomination which professes to be general in its character and purposes. It was formed for the purpose of uniting the different portions of the denomination in closer bonds of sympathy, and of doing something for the spread of truth and the promotion of piety. This Association, it will be admitted by all, has done much since its organization for the accomplishment of the objects for which it was formed. It has put forth inquiries, and has been instrumental in ascertaining the religious wants of the community. It has excited in the minds of many a deeper interest

than was before felt in the spiritual wants of men. It has set on foot measures which are tending to develop the spiritual wants of the indigent and wretched, and the capacity for moral and spiritual improvement, which though weakened and obscured, still exists in the most vicious and degraded, together with the best means of administering to these wants, and calling out this capacity into active exercise. It has sent out from time to time the heralds of a pure and simple faith. It has occasionally cheered by contributions, limited though they have been, those who stood in need of encouragement. It has issued nearly eight volumes of tracts. These publications have been scattered far and wide, and have done much good in correcting misrepresentations, in removing prejudices, in awakening from indifference, in arresting skepticism, and in establishing and enforcing truth. It will be seen at once that the American Unitarian Association, in order fully to accomplish the objects for which it was formed, should have a strong hold upon the affections and the patronage of the whole denomination. It cannot unite in bonds of Christian sympathy those who take no interest in its existence and operations. It can accomplish but little for the spread of truth and the promotion of piety, unless it is upheld by the ardent attachment, the fervent prayers, and the liberal contributions of the whole Unitarian community. In many hearts and throughout many societies, there are strong attachments to this Association.

In other minds and throughout other societies, there are decided objections to organizations in general, or to this Association in particular. But in most cases, we are informed by the General Secretary, that where opportuni-

ty has been afforded him to explain fully the Gospel principles on which the Association is based, the objects which it proposes to accomplish, and the mode of its operations, and to meet and answer all the various objections which he has heard ; these objections have been removed, and a deep interest has been excited. And it is believed, that if men will but bring the vague objections and doubts which may from time to time arise in their minds upon the subject of organization to the test of strict scrutiny, they will vanish at once. Indeed, it must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that if we intend to do any thing worthy of ourselves, and of the holy cause in which we are engaged, either in the way of building ourselves up as a spiritual people, or in the way of spreading the truth and extending the Redeemer's kingdom, we must have some sort of an organization. And it must be equally obvious to every one, who compares the results of the past ten years' exertions on the part of the American Unitarian Association with its limited means, that there is nothing in the peculiar form of its organization to render it inefficient. It is to be earnestly hoped, then, that all will give to the American Unitarian Association that large share of their affections which it is believed it fully deserves, — that clergymen will delight to recommend it to their people, that the rich will remember it in their charities, and all in their prayers.

In addition to the duties connected more particularly with the office of General Secretary, the Committee have directed their attention as usual to the publication of tracts. They have already commenced a new series of more extended Essays, the first of which is now in press. They are making arrangements to meet, if possible, the

want which has been expressed, of narrative tracts. These publications have been distributed not only through the auxiliaries and by sales, but many have been carried forth for gratuitous distribution by those who have visited distant places. Appropriations have in some cases been made from the funds to aid in defraying the expenses of those who have gone forth on missionary excursions.

The periodical publications of the denomination are, it is believed, in as prosperous condition as they have been at any former period. The demands of the community for serious and practical, or familiar and illustrative reading has, in a good degree, been met by the books which have appeared during the past year. Upon a review of the past progress and present condition of the denomination, we have much cause for gratitude for the blessing which has attended our exertions thus far, and much ground of encouragement to future and more strenuous efforts.

The denomination has indeed already made rapid advancement in much that is praiseworthy. Many and great changes have taken place, in habits of thought, states of feeling, and modes of action. And some at least, if not all of these changes seem to be improvements. But while we cherish gratitude for the prosperous condition of our denomination, let us look abroad upon the Christian world around us; and our gratitude will be increased when we consider that the principles for which we contend, are, in the Providence of God, making much more rapid progress than is marked by the visible increase of any one denomination. These principles are the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a

rule of faith and practice, and the right of private judgment in matters of religion. Let us rejoice that these important principles are fast gaining ground in most Christian denominations, even though it may be that those who adopt the same general principles do not arrive at the same speculative conclusions on all points.

But let us not suppose that the changes which are taking place in other denominations render exertions on our part the less necessary. It has been said that the contest in which we have for some time been engaged is at an end. This is a mistake. The contest is, indeed, in some places gradually changing its character. But in all places where Unitarianism is as yet but little known, the character of the contest is not changed. Those who are stationed upon the outposts of our denomination have the same ground to go over which has long since been passed over in places where our views are now well established. And even here in the midst of us the contest is still going on. There is still much effort to excite prejudice against our views, and to prevent the reading of our books or hearing our preachers. There is still much effort to draw away the members of our societies. It is true, that among the great mass of the community, there is not the same degree of bitterness in regard to us that there sometimes has been. There is not the same willingness to hear us denounced. There is a more kindly state of feeling. It will not answer then to speak to them as formerly, in the style of reproof. And as to argument, the feeling on the part of many in the community is, that ingenious men can frame powerful arguments, and draw plausible proof from Scripture, even in support of almost any set of opinions. They have but little confidence, there-

fore, in argument. They are disgusted with theological controversy. They are beginning to look for a manifestation of the moral power of the Gospel. They are beginning to say, let Unitarians and all other denominations of Christians go out into the world of their fellow-men, and labor to promote the spread of pure and undefiled religion ; and that denomination which succeeds best in this work will show that its views of divine truth are, to a less degree than others, weakened by the errors that may be mingled with them, or by any want of skill in the administration of that truth.

The Report having been read, Stephen Fairbanks, Esq. of Boston, rose and moved its acceptance.

I apprehend, he said, it is not necessary to enter into a discussion to induce the members of the Association to unite in the support of the motion which I have made. If I have not entirely mistaken the feelings of the whole Christian community, the views presented in this excellent Report will meet with universal acceptance. It is true, we are Unitarians, and we have associated together to cherish Unitarian sentiments, and our Agent is expected to promulgate this doctrine; still, Sir, it is not, I think, either expedient or proper for us to set up a crusade against other denominations. Sir, while I bless God that it is my happiness to have embraced this faith, a faith on which I place my fondest hopes for happiness here and hereafter, I should be unwilling to defend it, if I must, in order to do so, deny the right of private judgment to any fellow-christian. We should, as it seems to me, put

by all sectarian controversy and become at once fellow-laborers with all who will join us, in the great work of moral reform. I am highly gratified to find the report breathing throughout such a truly Christian spirit, — a spirit which I trust will commend itself to every Christian, and meet with a ready response from every heart.

Sir, we are the most prosperous and the most happy people on the face of the globe, and no country is blessed with a more learned and pious clergy than our own; but what can they do single handed? Their labors, however unremitted, will never be entirely successful, unless they receive the hearty co-operation of Christian laymen. Those fearful enemies to man's best hopes and happiness, infidelity and intemperance, with their accumulated evils, are beginning to tarnish the fair fame of our beloved country, and will in the end sap the very foundations of our holiest institutions, unless the friends of true piety and morality put forth their united strength in defence of that religion, which can alone render a people free and happy.

Truly, it is a question of most serious import, which we may well propose to ourselves, — shall we stand aloof and suffer the greatest of human scourges to overspread our entire country? I trust not. For one, I will raise my feeble voice in support of a cause, which I believe will bear me up under every earthly trial, and one which is so well authenticated as divine. But it was not my intention to say many words, though the topic is one that has long and deeply interested me. I will only add, if every layman will but acquire right feelings on this subject, and do what he may in aid of those sacred interests to which the clergy are consecrated, a happy result is certain, and the fondest wishes and best hopes of every devout Chris-

tian will be fully realized. I trust, Sir, the report will be accepted.

Rev. George W. Hosmer, of Northfield, seconded the motion for the acceptance of the Report.

I am happy, said he, to be present on this interesting occasion. I am glad to see so many encouraging faces, and to feel the presence of so many warm and sympathising hearts. I wish that every friend to our views of religion was here to-night, to participate in the pleasure which has been given by the Secretary's Report. That Report, Sir, needs no encomium from me. It speaks for itself. It is full of good sense — of a good spirit — of just principles and interesting facts, and bears ample testimony to the ability, diligence and fidelity of the Secretary.

I rejoice, continued Mr. H., in the services of that officer. I am grateful to those by whose liberality the office was established. In behalf of the region in which I live, I would thank the Association for the good which has been done among us. We have been unable to afford much aid in support of this office, but we cherish a deep interest in its operations, and a warm desire for its success.

Unwilling, as I am, Sir, to occupy the precious time of this meeting, I cannot forbear to remark upon one point which has been brought to view in the Report. The Secretary has expressed his conviction that the cause of christian truth requires that we should exert ourselves to the utmost. Sir, I believe his exhortations on this point are reasonable. I know it is a characteristic of enthusiasts, to imagine that the times in which they live, are peculiar and require peculiar exertion. I may be charged with enthusiasm, but I cannot divest my mind of the im-

pression, that we are passing through a solemn crisis, and that never were Christians called upon more urgently, to do every thing in their power, for the defence of truth.

Sir, there are two reasons why we, at this present time especially, should exert all our energies for Christian truth. The first arises from the present condition of our religious affairs, and the second from the position which, as Unitarians, we occupy among the other denominations of Christians. It must be evident to the most superficial observer, that a spirit of disorder is abroad in the religious community. There are dark signs in our religious affairs. Bigotry, indifference and skepticism, an impatience of all restraint, and a love of change are manifest. We wonder not that many are alarmed. It is not strange, that the hoary headed man as he leans upon his staff and looks back to the days of memory, exclaims, "The former days were better than these." But, Sir, do we rightly interpret the spirit of our times? There is indeed much to alarm, and something to discourage; but may we not hope that there is far beneath the disordered surface, an undercurrent, which if taken at the tide, may bear us on to more glorious results than the world has ever yet witnessed. Sir, in order to understand the spirit and tendency of our times in regard to religion, we must look back to the times which preceded us: to understand an effect, we must know its cause. Look then to the state of the religious community in New England seventy years ago. Then there was order, harmony and peace. Whole towns were united under the ministry of a single clergyman; and neighbors and friends walked to the house of God in company. But may we not suspect that much of the seeming virtue and order of that period was superficial and com-

pulsory? did they not act in accordance with custom and tradition? No doubt there were exceptions to this; but the general character of that period was formal and sluggish. We mean no disrespect to the intentions or conduct of our fathers; perhaps they did all they could; but the spirit of their age was dull. Years passed on; the revolutionary struggle came; and the elements of society were shaken. The public mind began to re-act from the extreme point of literal and traditionary authority, to which it had been carried, and during the last fifty years that re-action has been increasing more and more. A striking change has taken place. The incrustation of tradition and habit is broken, — respect for the letter is gone, — the ancient forms have disappeared, — and the elements are all in ferment, — as it were in a state of primeval chaos. We stand, Sir, amidst a revolution. The public mind has left its ancient moorings of religious faith and practice, and is drifting, God only knows whither. The friends of Christian truth are called upon to come to its guidance. A great work is to be done. Bigotry must be softened, — indifference roused, — unbelief and radicalism must be made to see the beauty of truth and submit to its authority. And this work, Sir, is one in which *all* Christians are interested. We talk about the controversy between differing sects, as though the great question in decision was, which of the many modes of faith is true: but I believe there is a great question in decision, which lies farther back than this; and it is, whether any of these modes of faith are true; in short, whether there be any truth in religion. I fear that this question presses closely upon the common mind; and in many cases we know that the decision is made in the negative. Many are ranging

themselves in the ranks of infidelity, and I fear that many more might do so, did not the love of approbation restrain them. Christianity then is in danger; and *all* its friends, — all that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity should rise up and unite their strength in its support and defence. But strange to say, Christians will not unite. Some think they cannot, — conscience does not allow some to stand by the side of others. How strange, Sir, is this state of things! Suppose that in the struggle for the independence of the United States, while the foe hung upon our borders and seized upon our fairest cities for their encampments, it had been ascertained that the men of the North and South did not agree in their ideas of a free government, and therefore had refused to stand together to meet the assaults of the common enemy; such conduct would have been absurd, and the result disastrous. Look now at Christianity; it is in peril from lukewarm professors and over-heated zealots within, and from assaulting foes without; and yet Christians, because they do not agree in all points, will not unite; and the enemies of our faith exult in our dissensions, and laugh when our fear cometh. United we stand, but divided we fall, and others in future days will be called to take up and carry forward the ark of truth. Our strong hope of doing something in this solemn crisis rests in the union and vigorous co-operation of all Christians. And, Sir, how is this union to be promoted? and here I come to the second reason why we as Unitarians should make a vigorous and continued effort. Sir, our position among different denominations of Christians may enable us to do much to unite and harmonize the distracted energies of the religious community. If we look around us, we behold the

great masses of men tending to the two opposite extremes. On the one hand are those who are deeply attached to religious principles, and for such attachment we honor them; but with this is bigotry and exclusiveness. On the other hand, we see those who have but little attachment to principle, who are impatient of all restraint, who thirst for liberty *without* law. And those in these opposite extremes are invested with a mutual repulsion; if left to their own tendencies, they will diverge more and more. Sir, if these extremes are ever to be brought together, where must be the point of union? It must be on the middle ground between the extremes. The principles on which this union must be based, are, *liberty*, *holiness* and *love*. These are the principles which, as Unitarians, we profess to hold. Sir, I tremble while I think how tremendous are our responsibilities! We are called to mediate between the extremes, — to offer the articles of peace, under which all can unite. We are to soften bigotry and exclusiveness on the one hand, and on the other, to inspire radical innovators with a reverence for truth; above all we are to set forth the saving principles on which we stand in the most convincing and attractive modes. We must prove them clearly, and in our *lives* we must illustrate their power. Our work is indeed great. It is a solemn thing to live in such a crisis and to occupy such a position. But, Sir, we may be encouraged. There are some bright tokens to cheer us. Our Secretary in his Report, has brought facts to view which show that we are gaining strength. Our denomination is increasing. I will not disguise my joy at this. But, Sir, I care little about names. I care not whether the name which we hold be widely adopted or not; but, Sir, I do care for the

extension of our principles; and I rejoice to believe that these principles are fast gaining the respect of the common mind. Compare the accredited orthodoxy of the present day with that which was received thirty years ago. It is a different system of theology. The rough points have been smoothed, and the harsher features softened. The extremes are relaxing and coming in towards the central principles of liberty and charity. Let us preach, and hear, and *live*, so that all of every name will rejoice to call us brethren, and to come and stand with us in the defence of Jesus and his Gospel. But, Sir, all may not see things in the light in which I have presented them. Some will utter dark prophecies, and look forward to disastrous results, and we may all at times be sick at heart, and weep over the disorders and desolation of the Christian church. But let us cling to the promise, that the church was founded upon a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. A great cause calls for our energies; let us guard ourselves for the work in Christian principles; may the spirit of our Master fill our breasts: and we shall not fail: — and even in our day, we may hope to behold the dawning of a brighter and happier era.

Rev. Charles Brooks, of Hingham, then addressed the meeting as follows:

If, said he, that part of the Report relating to the state of Unitarian Christianity in Europe had been as full as it was accurate, I should have felt justified in not yielding to a request to add to its statements. Confining myself to the suggestion of the Report, it will only be necessary briefly to narrate a few prominent facts, bespeaking for our brethren a deeper sympathy.

To begin with Great Britain. The number of Unitarian congregations is four hundred, scattered over the whole realm; and in most of them are persons of the highest respectability for talents and moral worth. Their chapels, about the size of our country churches, are very well filled; and more profoundly attentive congregations I never saw. In Liverpool they have been sneeringly called the "aspiring" and "fashionable" sect. If this means that they are intelligent, numerous and influential, it is true. Rev. G. Harris of Glasgow, in getting up a new society in Aberdeen, had fourteen hundred auditors. The "Manchester College," at York, under able professors, with that venerable and excellent man, Mr. Wellbeloved, at its head, has theological students, in numbers varying from ten to twenty. There are other institutions equally flourishing. The British and Foreign Unitarian Association have distributed eleven thousand tracts and books during the last year. The Unitarian mission to the poor in London has been successful; and Sabbath Schools are conducted on plans as nearly like ours as the different condition of the children in the two countries will admit. Many churches use prepared liturgies occasionally. Could not *we* also use them with increased advantage occasionally?

The Unitarian ministers I need not describe. You can see their faces and their hearts in their excellent writings, which have reached us. A new interest exists for deeper researches into biblical criticism. German studies are common; and recently some able suggestions have been offered on the importance of connecting more closely the study of natural science with revealed truth. We may here take a hint; for surely every advance in physical

science becomes a point from which rays of light shoot into the contiguous regions of theology. The Unitarian ministers are industrious scholars and most devoted Christians, and among them are preachers second to none in the country. They see each other less and exchange less than we do. This is owing partly to their separated situations, but mostly to their being occupied in teaching schools. This avocation prevents the parochial visiting which we deem so valuable. A minister with us goes a travelling gospel round his parish, blessed and blessing, while this time with them is devoted to elementary and classical instruction in schools. They regret this condition, as it precludes that community of feeling between the religious instructor and the instructed, which we find so helpful. In their *opinions* they follow Priestley closer than we do. This gives a philosophical, argumentative, and sometimes pugilistic cast to their sermons. The sectarian state of theology (for which not they, but the "national establishment," are to blame) has had the effect of removing Christianity from the heart to the head. Under these conventional circumstances Christianity does not, cannot so well reach the deepest wants of the soul. The common, unlettered Christian does not fully grasp it. The subject seems lifted beyond his reach. Such auditors ask for sentiment and they receive logic; for heat and receive light. This is perfectly explainable; for, when men through life contend for the *right* of private judgment, they are very liable at length to mistake the right for the *power*. If therefore the American visitor does not find that ready fire of feeling, that youthful spring and elasticity of thought which has been so heartily cherished here, and which has a free and unwatched

action in our land of equality, let him but penetrate the cause, and he will then cease to blame; he will rather admire the wisdom and perseverance shown in meeting the unavoidable tendencies of their position.

But no accurate idea can be gained of the strength of mind, the Christian heroism, and the flattering success of our English brethren, without understanding their connexion with the government and the "established church of England." The union of church and state in the kingdom gives a sort of politico-religious aspect to all questions, and is occasionally the cause of sudden, deep, earthquake convulsions. *Reform* is a word stereotyped in that country. Our Unitarian brethren are among the foremost of its judicious advocates. They love their king and their constitution; and let me state with emphasis, that they are not those reckless levellers and heartless radicals, which some of their unfriendly countrymen on this side the water have attempted to represent them. They are not all of the same opinion in politics. Some of them join that party of dissenters who are anxious for the speedy and total separation of church and state; while the rest have joined that other larger party who think that the "establishment," when purified and reformed, may be continued with benefit until the mass of the people are ready for a better alteration than can be hoped for at present. The first class have confidence in the full assertion of principle, but are told that they have an imprudent haste, and should be willing to wait that the harvest might be ripened by the natural advance of the summer's heat, and not call in the eruption of volcanic fire; because they may then chance to lay waste some of the greenest fields of hope. They *all* regret this alliance

of church and state; and some of the best arguments against it are drawn from our country. While listening to their debates and conversation, it often came into my mind that the union of church and state there will more and more resemble the clay and iron in Nebuchadnezzar's image; the materials may cleave but they will not incorporate. Our Unitarian brethren would therefore aim to reduce ecclesiastical authority to its *minimum*, and elevate learning and justice to their *maximum*.

You may ask if there be cause for the restive and complaining feelings of the dissenters generally, and especially of the Unitarians? Yes, cause enough. *Religiously*, our brethren cannot pick up the smallest crum that falls from the table of royal bounty. This negative condition is not the worst. They must pay the most onerous exactions for the support of the "established church!" The Unitarian cannot be married unless by a trinitarian minister with a trinitarian service! He can have no legal registration of the birth of his children without subjection to an equally repugnant confession! And the persecution seems not arrested even when he has passed to that world, where it is said "the wicked cease from troubling;" he cannot be buried in the parish grounds unless a trinitarian service be first said over his remains! But this is not the worst. He cannot receive a degree at either of the universities of Oxford or Cambridge unless he signs his name to the thirty-nine articles! Yes, no science-enamored youth in all that realm can go to slake his thirst at either of these *national* fountains unless he goes through the chancel of some cathedral! Thus, by law, they are as aliens in the very land of their birth! My friends, you can have but a slight conception of this out-

ward oppression. It eats as rust into the vitals of social prosperity. The Christian is forgotten in the exacting creditor; and thus the sober and conscientious advocates of truth are wronged, pillaged, dragooned by the myrmidons of ecclesiastical power; and tyranny is brought to bear with a carefully-adjusted pressure upon those who have been baptised by the name of Protestants. This is a key to half their writings. If, therefore, in the middle of a sermon, (which *here* would be wholly peaceful) you see them stop to brandish for once the sword of defence, you are to remember that their situation is not unlike that of the ancient Jews, when rebuilding their walls, who were obliged to hold a weapon of defence in one hand while they wielded the implement of labor in the other.

Our friends belong to the liberal party, and think that the sitting of Bishops in Parliament is no necessary adjunct to the English church; and moreover that all church dignities should not be in the gift of the crown. Against these and other kindred abuses of man's liberties and rights they have poured forth bitter and life-lasting remonstrances, hoping, praying, waiting for the day when knowledge should become authority and truth should become peace. Their opposition to human creeds and canonized error lays them liable to a system of ambuscade attack, a sort of hedge-warfare, which, at times, is exceedingly annoying. Every expedient seems allowable; yes, from the king down to his lowest vicar, the Unitarians are looked upon by all as intruders into the social union; and if I may descend to circumstances to show how multiform are the modes of attack, and how ridicule is used instead of argument against them, I would adduce what I heard in the House of Commons during the debate on

Mr. Wood's bill for the admission of dissenters to the honors and degrees of the national universities. The whole talent of the House was arrayed for the conflict, and Sir Robert Peel, then in the opposition, reserved himself for the last part of the evening (or rather for the morning, as the debate continued until day-break) and came out with all his strength against the bill. In the course of his speech he, yes, even *he*, could make use of these words, "How strange it would sound to hear it said that a Jew had entered 'Christ's College,' and that a Unitarian had been matriculated at 'Trinity.'" The proceedings relative to "Lady Hewley's charity" shew also the temper of the times, and the Vice-Chancellor may be considered as a fair specimen of many of their opponents.

Now, my friends, look at these facts, and do you not say, that we should be at pains to assure these heroic sufferers of our deep, warm and heartfelt sympathy, and give them, whenever we can, our right hand of fellowship? The cause of truth is *one* throughout the world. Its "field is the world." I love England dearly. No traveller can know her great and good men and not feel ready veneration and cordial love; but these do not blind me to features which stand as vivid blots on the blazonry of her power. Under the show of protection she has held over dissenters the deadly night-shade.

A growing attachment and respect for this country is apparent in our father-land; especially among our Unitarian brethren. The wanderer feels as though he had reached home when they throw open to him their doors. Generous, hospitable and communicative, they give you a Roman welcome. The tracts of this Association are often

re-printed in different parts of the realm, and penetrate even to the deepest coal-mines of Newcastle upon Tyne. A fair specimen of the repute in which some of our Unitarian writers are held by the scholars of London may be inferred from the following remark of Thomas Campbell, made to me in conversation on American authors. "I have read, I have studied Dr. Channing's large volume, and I think him the ablest moral writer now living."

Mr. President, these details have been extended to double the length I intended; and yet I seem but to have entered upon the subject.

In Ireland and Scotland I found large congregations and many able and devoted champions of uncorrupt Christianity. I intended to have spoken of Geneva, that place where the faith once delivered by Calvin has given place to "the faith once delivered to the saints." There you find the fruits of sound learning and evangelical piety; most grateful to the eye, most delicious to the taste. Of some parts of France I should have spoken, — but I have trespassed too far. Let me close, then, with bespeaking for our brethren in Europe a new and livelier sympathy. Let us cultivate a friendship which may prove as the clasp of souls; a friendship where heart shall answer to heart in the willing response of Christian confidence. Let good offices go round. Let the circle of light be complete. They bid *us* "God speed" from the lofty mountains of Switzerland, from the classic capital of Scotland, from the busy mart of London; and shall we not echo back the gratulation? The more we know of them the more we shall respect them. Let us, therefore, touch to-night a new chord in our hearts, that grand keynote, whose vibrations shall reach every brother's soul

beyond the sea: that key-note is *love*. Touching this, they will immediately sing with us at the *renovation* of pure Christianity, what the angels sung at its *introduction*,— "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; good-will to men."

Rev. Warren Burton of Hingham, followed Mr. Brooks.

Mr. President, — I beg leave to call the attention and the sympathies of this audience from the mother land, so wretched in respect to religious privileges, to the free but somewhat destitute child, our own country. I rise, Sir, to make a few remarks on that portion of the Report relating to the want of missionary effort in our Christian cause. Send us the "living voice," is the cry from many quarters of our land. I would leave this cry to produce its due effect alone, did I not know that it finds no hearing, or at least no sympathy with many who are influential in our community. They say that the light of truth is rising, and will at any rate at length shine over the world, — that it needs not to be diffused by any special means of ours, for God will send it everywhere in his own appointed time. But, Mr. President, I have the deepest conviction that this is a wrong view of the subject. Indeed, the very presence and condition of this audience refute the objection. Who can deny that this is the first city in the world in respect to religion, morals and general improvement? It is no flattery to say, I am now addressing the front-most rank in the grand procession of human nature on its march to perfection. Why is it that they can so look back upon the long line in the rear, and forward to none before? It is because that missionaries

have travelled the world, and borne the truth from age to to age, and from country to country, until its pre-eminent privileges have been put into our hands. But what is the meaning of missionary? It means a person *sent* by the superior authority of one, or the combined wills of several, to *carry* the principles of improvement where there is need. With this view, civilization owes its spread to the missionary. We may go back to the very beginning of things human. Important primary principles were doubtless communicated to the first created man by God's own voice, or that of some angel appointed to the mission. These expanding principles were carried into Egypt, thence into Greece, thence to Rome, — to Britain, — and finally, were brought into this country, and placed here in our own hands, — by philosophers and colonists, ordained to the work by a fore-seeing and all directing Providence. The world was to be peopled and enlightened, the way of peace was to be prepared, and those who were instrumental to this, were God's chosen missionaries. Had they not been sent, and their times and places been ordered by the God of the whole earth, the arts and sciences would have lingered for untold ages around the cradle of their birth.

No one of Christian belief doubts that religious truth has been communicated by special emissaries, from the beginning. Angels and prophets, Jesus and the Apostles, were all sent, — one long missionary series to draw the world to its God. And when particular inspirations ceased to descend into chosen minds, the spirit of missions did not cease. The Saviour has ever fulfilled his parting promise, to be with his followers to the end of the world. He has continued with them in the new spirit of

philanthropy and self-sacrifice that has prompted and inspired them to arduous enterprises for human good. This spirit has imbued all the peculiar forms under which Christianity has appeared. The Catholics, — the Calvinists, — how untiring have been their efforts! How many churches have they planted on the icy sides of the North, and in the parched valleys of the South. And shall not the spirit of missions enter into ourselves, who owe so much to the heaven-sent missionary? Indeed, it has entered and operated here. What wonders have been wrought by your city mission to the poor. Many who once grovelled in the dark depths of pollution, are now witnesses on the heights of purity and light. Still further, our settled clergy are truly missionaries. By Providence they are sent to the churches, by these they are sent round to every home, and every individual put under their charge, with the Gospel in their hands, on their tongues, and in their characters. Now, where is the wisdom that objects to extending the labors of such men? Would you say to our merchants, you should trade only with each other at home, or with neighboring markets, — send not your ships across the seas to bear the knowledge of our free institutions, together with our products to other lands, and to bring back the riches of matter and of mind in return. But just as well say this, — just as well chain commerce to the domestic shore, as advise that our preachers should stay always at home, and operate only on the spot where they happen at first to stand.

It may be objected, that the sending forth of missionaries savors too much of that over-zealousness which has been so disgusting in some other sects. To this I reply, that I do not perceive this over-heated zealousness com-

plained of, when I consider the infinite value put by these sects upon their peculiar tenets. I feel no spirit of competition. They are in general, I believe, acting from right motives, and are in general doing much good. Their feet are yet beautiful on many dark mountains to which we have not made our way. I honor these bearers of glad tidings. I bid them God-speed with all my heart, if they shall bring wanderers to the path of duty, who otherwise must be lost. But there are other heights, and many loftier ones too, to which these messengers go not up. Here it is left for us to ascend, and unless we do so, darkness and desolation must abide. There are great crises in human affairs that demand peculiar exertion. It was so when the chosen people were led from Egypt, and the Mosaic dispensation was established. It was so when the Son of God assumed his mission, and his Apostles were sent on their mission to all the world. And from the facts which have been this evening presented, and from many signs at home and abroad, there is at this moment a crisis of great and fearful importance. The minds of men are in a state of unwonted agitation. Human opinion is surging like the waves of the sea. Doubt is taking the place of blindly-believed tradition, far and wide in our country. Utter atheism in some places is spreading its blight. Thousands in those parts where these things most prevail, are trembling for the result. They are calling to us for aid. Send us missionaries, — let us have the "living voice," is their cry. Yes, the living voice they want, and they must have. Our tracts and periodicals are not sufficient. These have no hearts, — no lips touched with the burning coal of persuasion. Theirs is not that music of our religion which charms

the ear, and lingers sweetly on the memory. They must have the living, preaching, and exemplifying man.

Many of this audience, in consequence of their unequalled advantages, will soon go from this temple of a blessed religion, to enjoy still happier scenes under their own roofs. They go, I trust, to realize, or at least, almost realize that miniature heaven, so exquisitely portrayed by our American Edgeworth, — the Christian Home. While thus favored by the common Father of all, ought they not to compassionate the ten thousand families in the moral wilderness of our country, to whom the Christian home is indeed nothing but a fiction, — who have no conception of its holy felicities? They have heard no Gospel in which they could believe. How can they hear without a preacher, and how shall the preacher come unless he be *sent*. The materials of the fitly-joined and love-cemented domestic edifice are ready. But they are placed together in rude disorder, and in rude disorder they will still lie, unless builders appear such as we can send, — architects who shall dig deep and lay the foundations in reason, and in the love as well as the fear of the Lord, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

Finally, Mr. President, I wish that we could all feel that we are all missionaries,— that each one is sent to do something for the progress of religious truth. It has been beautifully said, that every Christian should be a Christ and a Saviour in his own particular sphere. Each one is anointed to bear salvation into the minds, hearts and characters of all the needy within reach. Is it so? Then let us not be unfaithful to our consecration!

We believe that men are now the chosen instruments with which God would operate on men. Miraculous in-

spiration has ceased. Winged angels no longer descend from heaven with messages of light and love. With our ordinary but divinely-given powers, WE are the Lord's anointed, — WE are the messengers of mercy to the darkened and the suffering in the earth. O let us not forget the spiritually-shining garments with which we are indued. Let not the pinions of swiftness, which the times hold out and are waiting for us to put on, remain unreceived and unused.

Rev. W. G. Eliot of St. Louis, Missouri, next addressed the meeting.

He said that the lateness of the hour would prevent him from saying more than a few words, but the subject on which he wished to speak was one which he had so much at heart, that he could not be wholly silent.

I would call your attention, Mr. President, to that part of the Report which alludes to the religious wants of the West, and I wish to be understood as speaking not theoretically, but from observations which I have myself made of what these wants are. They are not imaginary, but real and pressing, and are obvious enough to any one who lives but a month west of the mountains; and if we really believe that our faith has peculiarly easy access to impartial minds, the demand upon us to be very active in the work of supplying these wants is peculiarly great. While I make this remark, the question occurs to me, which has often been asked, What have we done in the West? what progress has our faith thus far made? In truth, though in sadness we must answer, very little. There is no sect of Christians I may almost say, which has not done more towards the establishmet of permanent

religious institutions in the West than we have done. But why is this? because they have a better field to work in than we? because we cannot do any thing there if we try? No. It is because we have not tried. Where we have done nothing we have tried nothing. In proportion to the effort which has been made a great deal has been done; and there is abundant encouragement to increase our efforts. In Cincinnati, Ohio, there is one flourishing Society; in Louisville, Kentucky, there is another; in St. Louis, Missouri, there is another, or rather I should say another has been begun with good hopes, and will soon be, by the blessing of God, firmly established. These are the only places in which an effort has been made, and in these it has been made under by no means favorable circumstances. The societies in the two former cities have grown up almost of their own accord, with little help from abroad. They began, struggled through all the difficulties and discouragements incident to a new society in a community where every one is suspicious of its doctrines, and have at last become strong almost in spite of every thing. And now, from the isolated situation, which deprives them of sympathy and help of every sort, they are upheld only by their innate strength, for they have little of the encouragement which most sects are so glad to extend to their feeble and distant churches. It would not be surprising if these societies were feeble almost to falling, and if they are flourishing, it is the strongest proof possible, that nothing is needed but increased and more energetic effort to establish in every town of the West a church, which shall call in multitudes of those now on the verge of an irreligious indifference. The complete success of the only attempts which have been made, affords the

best possible motive for our working more diligently hereafter.

If, then, we wish to secure the establishment of our faith in the West, and we must wish it if we take an interest in the religious well-being of our country, what is to be done? In the West we are suffering from a double want, which must be supplied before our faith can prosper. First of all we want *preachers;* this is the first and chief want, for without them we cannot go on at all. We want preachers, strong, thinking, fervent, devoted men. I do not speak of great talent; we can do without that; but without men of disinterested, persevering self-devotion we cannot do. It is not any peculiar powers of oratory which are needed. The most successful preachers in the West are remarkable for their simple, earnest manner, far more than any thing of a declamatory style. We need chiefly good sense and devoted love of Christ; and above all a willingness to labor long and arduously in laying the foundation, on which others may hereafter have the honor of building. It is by means of this self-forgetting earnestness that we must prosper there, if at all.

Our other want is, sympathy, aid, encouragement from our brethren of the East. Our societies are small and stand alone. No one can tell the discouragements we have to encounter. Especially when a society is just beginning to form itself, aid is almost indispensable. There are so few who are ready to take an active part when ultimate success is doubtful, that, one half the time, efforts to form a society fail, when a little help in the beginning would have secured complete success. This is particularly true in the West, where the majority do not belong to any sect, and are unwilling to make any sacrifices in

the building of any particular church, although they may be glad to frequent it after it is already built. Thus the burden of beginning a society falls upon a very few, and these few, if not helped forward, are very often unable to accomplish their object. No one can feel the whole truth of these remarks, except those who have witnessed the growing up of a new society in the Western States. But, Mr. President, the case is commonly this; either we must have a little help, a kind hand extended during the first stages of our endeavors, or we must fail altogether. In the day of our small things, give us from your abundance, and we may soon be able to return to you fourfold.

Rev. Mr. LINCOLN of Fitchburg, then addressed the meeting, but on account of the lateness of the hour, was obliged to curtail the remarks he had intended to make.

Mr. L. spoke of the moral power of the Gospel, as the great object to which we ought to direct our chief attention. We have had much controversy, said he, to refute the thrice refuted error. We have succeeded in impressing our views of Christian truth on the minds and hearts of a great multitude. The time, indeed, has not arrived for the close of controversy. Truth must yet be defended, for there are many who misunderstand, and therefore oppose it. But it is more important to act as Christians, for the promotion of the great moral purposes of Christianity. To do this, we must bring the practical truths of the Gospel to bear more fully on our own hearts.

The question now is, with a large mass of the community, not so much what is speculatively true, as what is adapted to promote a spirit of fervent piety. Let us shew, said he, by our lives, our characters, our good works, that

the faith which we hold possesses this moral power, and we shall do more for correct doctrinal views than by whole volumes of controversy. Look at the state of our cities and villages. They call for deep, impressive, serious and fervent views of religion. It is by this means that our people are to be bound together, and the spirit of the Gospel promoted. As we desire the prosperity of religion in New England, — as we value the cause of human virtue, — as we are anxious for the happiness of man, let us, said Mr. L., do all in our power to promote the vital spirit of the Gospel, and we may be sure of the blessing of God, and the success of our cause.

After the addresses, which were listened to with deep interest by a numerous audience, the question on the acceptance of the Report was put by the President, and carried by a unanimous vote. The "Dismmission Hymn" was then sung, and, at 10 o'clock, the Association, agreeably to a previous vote, adjourned to meet on Wednesday, at 12 o'clock.

The Association met, according to adjournment, at 12 o'clock, on Wednesday, May 27, in the Berry-street Vestry, Rev. Dr. Bancroft presiding. The Report of the Special Committee, appointed at the last meeting to confer with the Executive Committee in regard to the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of the General Secretary, was presented and accepted. Whereupon, it was voted to proceed immediately to the choice of Officers for the ensuing year.

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OF THE
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.
1835—36.

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The Rev. EZRA S. GANNETT having declined being a candidate for re-election, the thanks of the Association were voted him for his past services as a member of the Executive Committee.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1. The name of this Association shall be The American Unitarian Association.

2. The object of this Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country.

3. Unitarian Christians throughout the United States shall be invited to unite and co-operate with this Association.

4. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription shall be paid, and a subscription of $30 shall constitute a person a member for life.

5. The officers shall be a President, fifteen Vice Presidents, a General Secretary, who shall have the care of all the business and interests of the Association under the control of the Executive Committee, an Assistant Secretary who, in case of the absence or sickness of the General Secretary, shall perform such duties of a Recording and Corresponding Secretary as may require immediate attention, a Treasurer, and three Directors.

6. The Directors, Secretaries, and Treasurer, shall constitute the Executive Committee, who shall meet once in each month, and shall have the direction of the funds and operations of the Association.

7. An annual meeting shall be held at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall deem advisable, of which due notice shall be given, and at which officers shall be cho-

sen, reports be made, and any other business be transacted, which may come before the Association.

8. The Executive Committee shall have power to fill any vacancies which may occur among the officers between any two annual meetings.

9. Any amendments of this constitution shall be proposed at one annual meeting, and may be accepted at the next anniversary, if two thirds of the members present be in favor of such amendments.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, September 23, 1826, as amended March 18, 1830.

'*Resolved*, That every member of the Association be entitled to one copy of every tract *of the first and second series* published by the Association *during the year for which his subscription is entered.*'

Vote of the Executive Committee, passed January 4, 1826.

'*Voted*, That no society be recognised as auxiliary to this Association, the terms of subscription to which are less than those required in the Constitution of this Association.'

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, June 20, 1833.

Voted, That the 4th Article of the Constitution be so construed, that any one who shall pay $30 for the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association, either at once, or by annual instalments within five years, shall be considered a life member.

CLERGYMEN MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

The following Clergymen have been made members for life of the American Unitarian Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

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